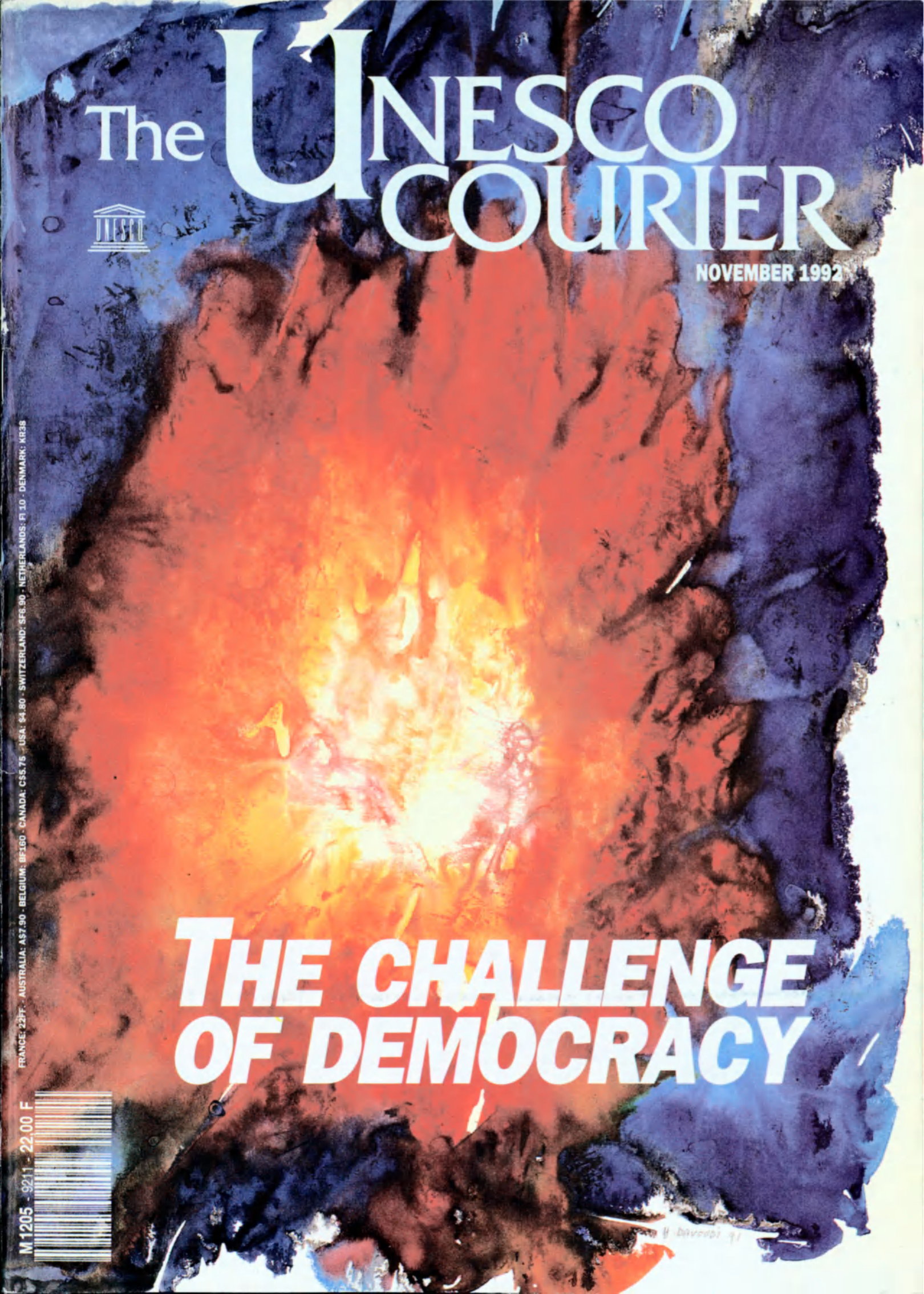
The UNESCO COURIER

NOVEMBER 1992



THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY

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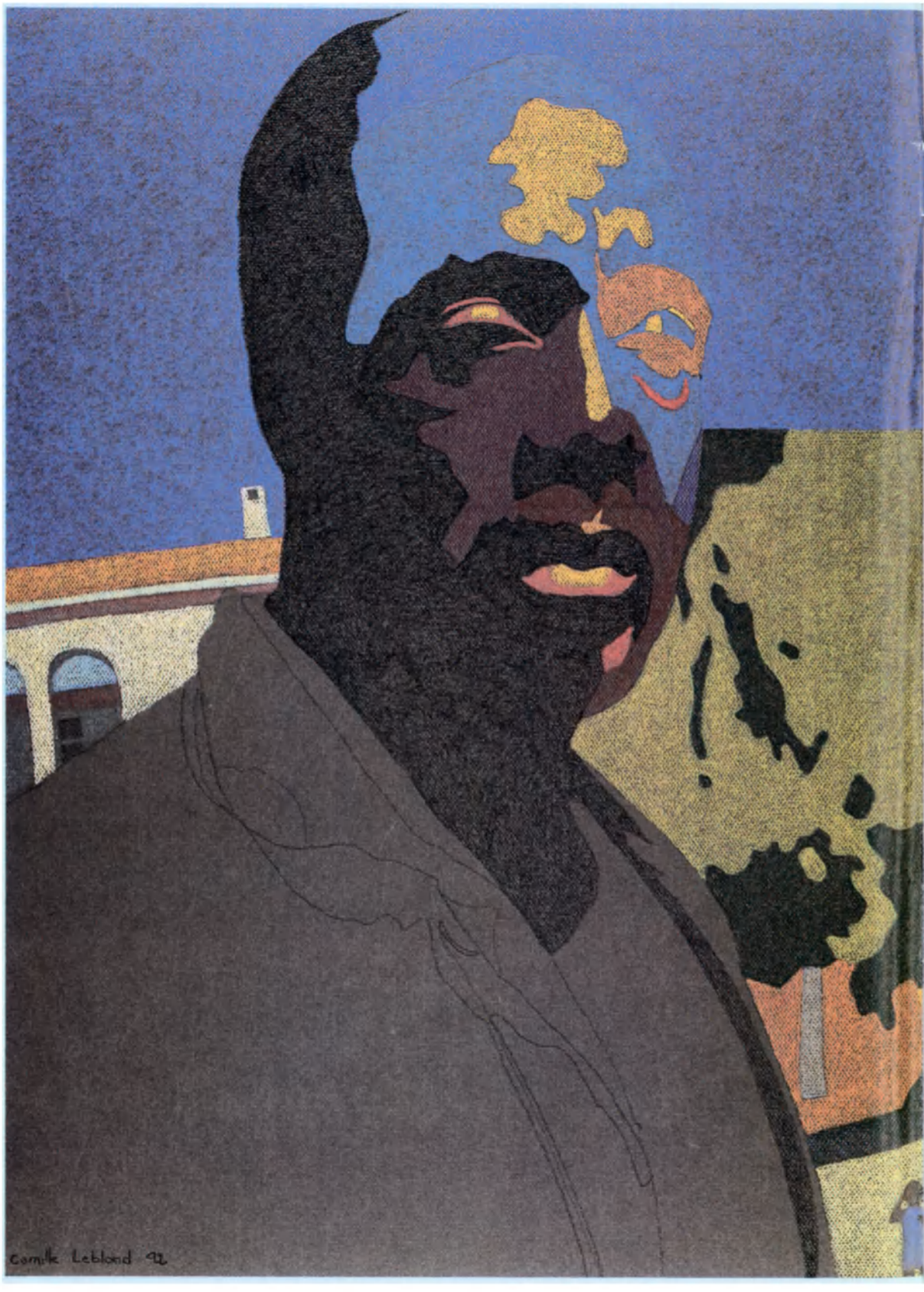
We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cross-fertilization between cultures. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.



Roots, Joe and Gorée,
1992, dry pastel, 59 x 79 cm,
by Camille Leblond

Camille Leblond is a French painter who set up his studio on the Senegalese island of Gorée, which was one of the earliest assembly points for the Atlantic slave trade and has been on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 1978. Gorée's House of Slaves and other monuments connected with the slave trade attract visitors from all over the world, including black Americans retracing the steps their ancestors took when they were shipped from Africa two centuries ago. One such black American is the painter's friend Joe.

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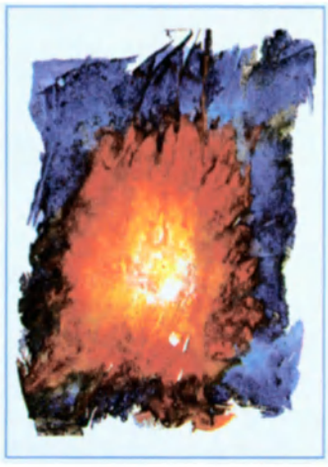


Cover:
Untitled, ink on paper by Hossein Davoudi, Iranian diplomat and painter.

Back cover:
Joyful faces in Prague (Czechoslovakia) on the election of Vaclav Havel as President of the Republic in 1990.

The UNESCO COURIER

45th year — Published monthly in 33 languages and in Braille

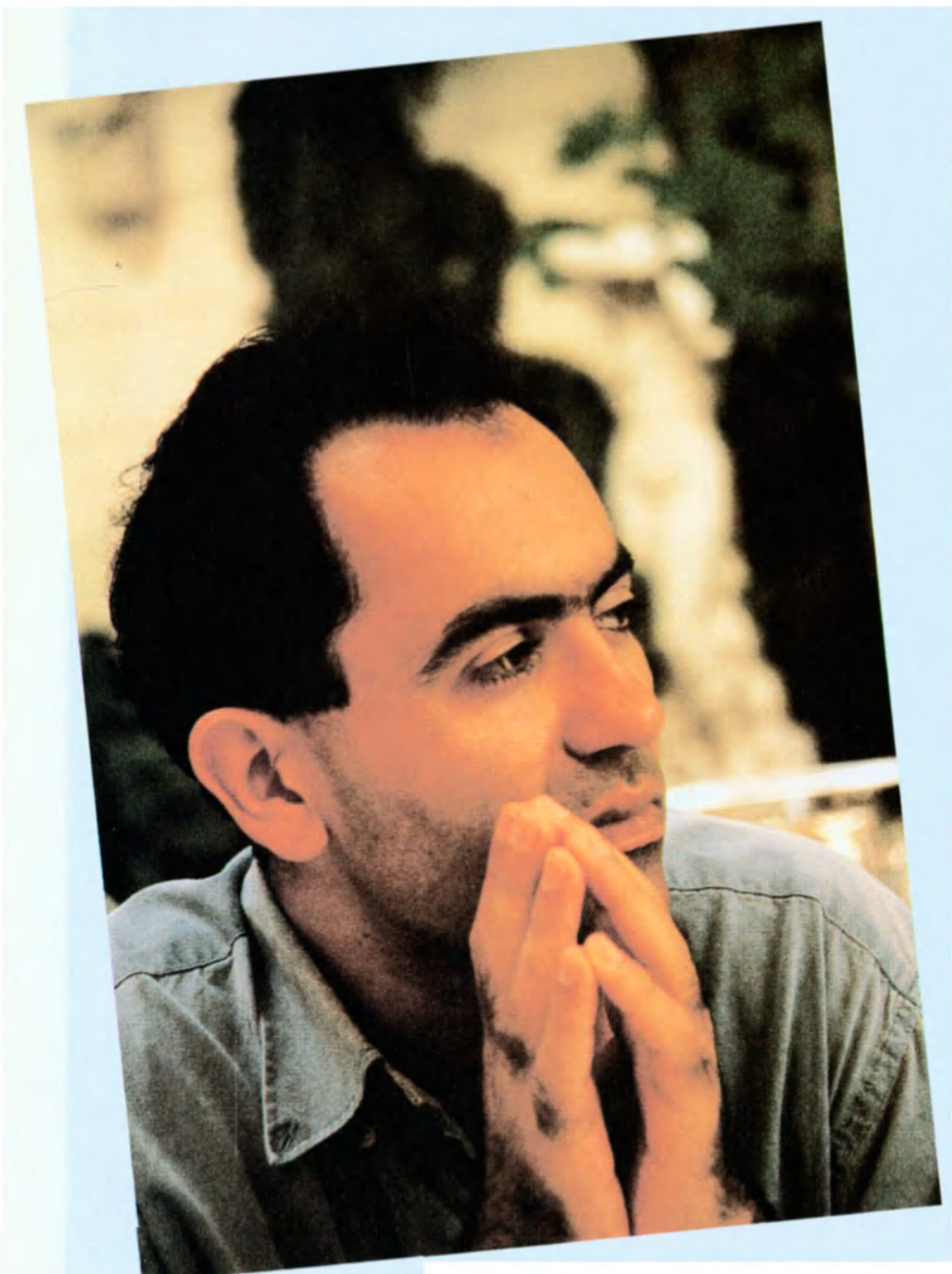
"The Governments of the States parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare,
"that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed . . .
"that a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.
"For these reasons, the States parties . . . are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives. . . ."

EXTRACT FROM THE PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF UNESCO, LONDON, 16 NOVEMBER 1945

Lebanese pianist and composer

ABDEL RAHMAN EL BACHA

talks to Neda el Khazen



Abdel Rahman El Bacha won the prestigious Queen Elisabeth of Belgium competition in 1978. Since then he has won an international reputation as one of the most outstanding pianists of his generation, and has played with some of the world's leading orchestras and conductors. Among his recordings are the early piano works of Prokofiev (for which he was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque of the French Académie Charles Cros in 1983), three Bach concertos, a number of Mozart sonatas and Ravel's piano concertos. He is currently recording all Beethoven's sonatas. (All these records are published by Forlane, Boulogne, France).

■ *Nowadays, all artists seek international recognition. Is this is a sign of a more universal outlook, at least in the arts?*

—All artists need to be noticed because they need to give something of themselves to everybody, without exception. I think this is the main reason why they need worldwide recognition. They may never win unanimous praise from the public during their own lifetime, but the important thing for them is the feeling that they have something to say. If other people are slow to realize this then it's too bad—above all for them. Artists can always find consolation in their art.

■ *You grew up in Lebanon, a country permeated by a wide variety of cultural influences, in a family with a strong interest in music. How did your career as an artist begin?*

—It began in the most natural of ways, since I lived and breathed music from when I was a very small child. My father was a well-known composer. My mother, who had an innate feeling for music, sang traditional and popular songs without ever being able to read a single note.

When I was about three or four, I hummed the tunes written by my father, in which all the vivid colouring of Lebanese folk music was brought out by the harmonic richness of Western scoring and instrumentation. My father had a piano on which he tried out his compositions. By the time I was about six, I could play my favourite songs on it, a few tunes I had picked up at random.

In 1967, when I was nine, I began to study the piano seriously. As I came to discover classical music, I developed a passion for Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin and Schumann. At the age

of ten, I played a Bach concerto in public. I gave my first recital in 1974 at the Assembly Hall, the chapel of the American University of Beirut. It was attended by the Soviet, British and French ambassadors, who all offered me scholarships. I opted for France, on account of cultural affinities and also because I could go on with my general education there. I was accepted at the Conservatoire Supérieur de Musique in Paris just before war broke out in Lebanon.

■ *In a country that has been wracked by long years of war, do you think that other young people will manage to make their careers in music, just as you did?*

—I hope so. When people have to contend with difficulties in their lives and with suffering day in day out, music becomes a necessity, a saving grace. Those young people will probably enjoy fewer opportunities, but even so there are still some piano teachers left in Lebanon and it is still possible to find pianos, even though there are not many skilled piano-tuners and it can be very distressing to have to work at the piano when you have lost a member of your family or you are in the middle of a bombardment. I do not think that the war has stifled the urge to create—on the contrary. I give concerts in Lebanon regularly and they are usually attended by large numbers of young people who are clearly listening intently to the music and are eager to understand and absorb it.

Music responds to a need for the absolute, in that it cuts through the misunderstandings that can be caused by words, in philosophical and religious discourse, for example. Music appeals to sensibility and intuition and speaks straight to the heart. It is a universal language which brings back humanity to its true calling of spreading tolerance and love.

■ *Sensibility and intuition are words that are often used to describe the way you play—with great virtuosity, but without any of the flourishes or bravura passages that attract attention to the pianist.*

—What I am looking for is true expressiveness. I want to please, but only the most demanding ear. I do not want to make a superficial impact. You speak of virtuosity. I admit that I have a certain fluency, but I could just as well have put it to some other use. I want to use my technical gifts to strive for the purest and most rigorous form of expression. This is not to everybody's taste and those who see art as a diverting pastime do not necessarily appreciate my style of playing.

■ *And yet when you play one can always feel your pleasure in the music.*

—Consummate art to some degree entails achieving harmony between mind and body. I have always looked forward to sitting down at the piano and playing. The moment I feel that I am anywhere near saturation point, I stop, so that my relationship with the piano and music remains harmonious. I am happy whenever listeners experience this unity directly, through the interpretations I offer them. Classical music has a spiritual and aesthetic dimension that brings me great happiness.

■ *Do your musical tastes owe anything to the culture in which you grew up?*

—Yes and no. My approach to music is never purely intellectual, and this is doubtless due to my origins. To reach me, music must be melodic before all else. I grew up in Lebanon, between East and West, and this has certainly played a part in shaping my tastes. All the same, I have never made a distinction between Oriental and Western music, but rather between music I found beautiful and music I didn't.

■ *Isn't beauty a relative notion, subject to change?*

—Certainly. Because with time, people mature and absorb life's vibrations differently. Things we find beautiful at the age of fifteen may appear different to us when we get to thirty. I am thinking particularly of one Chopin concerto, which I considered sublime when I was quite young. Today, I see the charm of this piece as being something quite different from what I saw then. The way I look at it has changed and so have my feelings towards it. When I was fifteen, I wasn't very keen on playing Beethoven's late sonatas. I was quite incapable of grasping or even guessing at the suffering that haunts them. Today, I feel that if anything ought to survive forever, it is Beethoven's last works.

■ *What attracts you to Beethoven?*

—Both the man and the artist. Beethoven is an artist whose humanist thinking is fed by his art. His music is truly the reflection of his personality, the product of an outstanding mind and a profoundly generous human being. The intellectual stature is on a par with the feeling. I respond to the man as much as I do to the work, and this makes me want to play and interpret his music.

Nothing is more difficult to achieve in art than the marvellous balance he managed to strike between technique and sensibility, between form and emotion. In *The Prophet*, the great Lebanese writer Khalil Gibran compared passion to a rudderless ship and reason to a ship with a rudder but with no sails. Instinct must be the ally of knowledge and we must beware of being carried away by fashions based on the worship of spontaneity, since they will always lack an essential dimension. In this respect, nature sets us a fine example of harmony. Look at a tree and see how beautiful it is—and yet what complexity there is beneath its aesthetic perfection!

■ *In recording the whole of Beethoven's sonatas, you have embarked on a very ambitious undertaking. What prompted you to do this?*

—I have already cut seven of the nine records that are due to be issued between now and 1994. In all, it will have taken me six years, a year and a half more than expected. What prompted me? One day, I felt an urge to play all these sonatas in their chronological order. As I did so, I realized that they formed a progression, in the course of which the tone and the style matured. They are a reflection of the composer's life and psychological development. So I wanted to play the early sonatas in the way suggested by this pattern of development, gradually moving away from the influence of his predecessors, such as Haydn, and trimming away features that Beethoven himself eventually discarded, so as to reveal their essential nature. This is an enthralling task, but a difficult one. When I come to the end, in early 1994, I shall play all thirty-two sonatas at seven recitals extending over a period of two and a half months at the Châtelet auditorium in Paris.

■ *What are your plans after that?*

—At the moment, I am irresistibly drawn to three composers. Chopin, my first great passion at the keyboard, whom I am now rediscovering by re-reading his works and his life—especially the accounts his students left of the way he played and taught the piano. He emerges as a rather different person from the Chopin we usually hear. One can see that he

deliberately set out to be simple and uncomplicated, shunning facile effects and seeking purity of expression through the depth he gave to certain details. Chopin's music was long played unsystematically, whereas his own playing was more disciplined.

Then there is Schumann, whose music overwhelms me, even though certain chords—more descriptive than expressive, and too jerky—repel me a little. Even so, his music is sincere; it comes from the soul of a poet. It is a token of freedom, compared with the conventions of his time.

Thirdly, there is Ravel, the only French composer of whom I am an unconditional admirer and whose works for piano—which fit onto only three discs, incidentally—I should really like to record. What attracts me to him is his style, his feeling for Oriental colour through his taste for Spanish music, and his modesty. He drew a prodigious sound quality from the piano.

■ *Do you consistently look for Oriental tones in classical music?*

—I am captivated by music that conjures up memories of my childhood, quite apart from the satisfaction it gives me as a musician and pianist. But "local" effects, whether Oriental or Western, are not the first thing I look for. Beethoven would not have interested me if, instead of expressing the human soul, he had only reflected German culture, much as I admire that culture. But what makes music so precious to me is that it transcends civilizations. It is true that we are all products of a particular civilization, which shapes our personality in ways that we don't always realize. On the other hand, we may have a conscious wish to reach out to all humanity and to refine the way we express ourselves in order to embrace the universal. If music which has an Oriental tone strives towards that absolute, then I'm all for it. But if Oriental colouring is the only thing it has to offer, then it's not what I am looking for.

■ *Presumably the outstanding polyphonic qualities of the piano make it the best instrument for producing a wide variety of sounds.*

—The piano is the instrument that englobes all the others: the human voice, woodwind and strings, the sounds of nature. It is like an orchestra, in the sense that it can be made to produce bass registers, harmonies and instrumental tones. But the fact remains that the piano is a percussion instrument and it is quite a feat to make it sing. No instrument is perfect: it is easy to play a tied *legato* on a violin, but it is sometimes difficult to grasp the rhythm.

■ *You are invited to perform all over Europe, in Japan, the Middle East and the United States. European classical music gets an extraordinary reception all over the world. Does Europe offer a similar welcome to music from other parts of the world?*

—The grandeur of classical music speaks to our innermost selves, no matter what civilization we belong to. For me, there have never been any barriers separating different musical forms and traditions. I find the same spirituality, the same power of expression, the same nobility of language in great Arab music as I do in Indian instrumental improvisations, although they may be difficult to grasp if we have not been taught to appreciate or understand them. We need Indian music today just as much as we need Beethoven's symphonies. What we must do is learn to approach these different musical languages and look further than the aspects of them which bind them to a particular culture or period and all too often confine them to a local setting. Thanks to recordings, these musical forms are now reaching new audiences, but much remains to be done if they are to occupy the place they deserve.

■ *Do you teach?*

—I taught in an academy of music for two years. At the moment, I give private lessons to advanced students. Some of my students study pieces which I myself have played but which they interpret differently. This kind of comparison is very instructive, in that it forces me to examine and justify my own approach to the works in question. I have to do this if I am to provide my students with sustenance.

But the important thing is that students should propose something coherent, and if they do I encourage them to persevere in their way of thinking. Teaching obliges people to acknowledge the existence of diversity and, in that sense, it leads to a truly human learning process and compels one to look afresh at oneself and one's art.

■ *What are your feelings when you give a concert and experience those marvellous but fleeting moments that can never be exactly repeated?*

—I experience through the music a moment of intense communion with my fellow human beings. If my programmes were designed merely to charm and captivate the audience, the bond would probably not be the same. The bond is intense because the message conveyed by the music is also intense.

The way you face the audience changes considerably as you get older. When you are very young, you don't get stage-fright, but by the time you are ten or eleven, you start to feel it, although it is still easy to motivate yourself—you want to pass examinations and win diplomas, and this makes you combative. You only really start to realize the risks you are taking after the age of twenty. It is very frightening, an awesome responsibility, to give a concert before the public in a hall where great musicians have performed before you. I had to take a firm grip on myself before I realized that stage-fright is really a kind of pride. I saw that I had to fight that feeling by telling myself that what people came to hear was not me but the music and that I wanted to offer them that music in the way that I liked it and that they too might like it. This completely changed my attitude to performing in public. I no longer felt that a concert was an occasion for me to perform acrobatics—although I *can* do that—but a moment of pure beauty to be shared. The conquest of pride is a task that must be faced every day of our lives. The lessons of humility are endless. ❑

The challenge of democracy

MONTEVIDEO in 1990, Prague in 1991, and Tunis in 1992—three capitals on three different continents—have served as the venues for meetings marking three successive stages in the debate on democracy in the present-day world on which UNESCO has embarked. This geographical diversity is not fortuitous, since democracy is no longer the historical privilege of any one continent. To quote the celebrated phrase which Jean-Paul Sartre used long ago to describe Marxism, democracy has become the "boundless horizon" of our time. Hopes for renewal are increasingly being vested in democracy, not only in Latin America and Eastern Europe, but also—and this is not stressed often enough—outside the orbit of European culture, in Africa and Asia. With waning nationalistic fervour and the fading of socialist mirages, individuals in the South are aspiring to a form of citizenship that protects them both from the pressures of the community and from state oppression.

In societies where individuals are required to perform many duties, they are now intent on enjoying rights, discharging responsibilities and availing themselves of the freedom to think, to speak, and to choose and dismiss their leaders.

But as the ideal of freedom spreads to the entire planet, it is meeting hitherto unknown obstacles and raising new questions. It arouses different expectations in different places. Some define it in essentially negative terms as the end of dictatorship. For others, it satisfies a hunger for individual emancipation and is synonymous with a democratic system whose contours have yet to be traced in today's fast-changing political, economic and cultural landscape. For yet others, it is coming to mean the establishment of a specific set of legal and political institutions.

Democracy can only exist in places where people are free to choose those who rule them. It is also vital that its ground-rules should be respected by all concerned and that no-one should be able to use universal suffrage to gain power and then deprive others of access to power. In other words, democracy must be rooted in a set of values, rules and priorities which are broadly shared and allow acceptable compromises to be made between divergent interests.

In a context in which crucial economic and technological choices are being made at the world level—and no longer by nations and regions acting individually—the fate of democracy in any country is bound to be influenced by international developments. The economic balances and social solidarity that are the prerequisites for building democracy in individual countries are becoming increasingly imperative on a global scale. In other words, the fate of freedom can now be said to depend, to some degree, on each and every one of us.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

by Alain Touraine

DEMOCRACY these days is more commonly defined in negative terms, as freedom from arbitrary actions, the personality cult or the rule of a *nomenklatura*, than by reference to what it can achieve or the social forces behind it. What are we celebrating today? The downfall of authoritarian regimes or the triumph of democracy? And we think back and remember that popular movements which overthrew *anciens régimes* have given rise to totalitarian regimes practising state terrorism.

So we are initially attracted to a modest, purely liberal concept of democracy, defined negatively as a regime in which power cannot be taken or held against the will of the majority. Is it not enough of an achievement to rid the planet of all regimes not based on the free choice of government by the governed? Is this cautious concept not also the most valid, since it runs counter both to absolute power based on tradition and divine right, and also to the voluntarism that appeals to the people's interests and rights and then, in the name of its liberation and independence, imposes on it military or ideological mobilization leading to the repression of all forms of opposition?

This negative concept of democracy and freedom, expounded notably by Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper, is convincing because the main thing today is to free individuals and groups from the stifling control of a governing élite speaking on behalf of the people and the nation. It is now impossible to defend an anti-liberal concept of democracy, and there is no longer any doubt that the so-called "people's democracies" were dictatorships imposed on peoples by political leaders relying on foreign armies. Democracy is a matter of the free choice of government, not the pursuit of "popular" policies.

In the light of these truths, which recent events have made self-evident, the following question must be asked. Freedom of political choice is a prerequisite of democracy, but is it the only one? Is democracy merely a matter of procedure? In other words, can it be defined without reference to its ends, that is to the relationships it creates between individuals and groups? At a time when so many authoritarian regimes are collapsing, we also need to examine the content of democracy—although the most urgent task is to bear in mind that democracy cannot exist without freedom of political choice.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ILLUSION

Revolutions sweep away an old order: they do not create democracy. We have now emerged from the era of revolutions, because the world is no longer dominated by tradition and religion, and because order has been largely replaced by movement. We suffer more from the evils of modernity than from those of tradition. Liberation from the past interests us less and less; we are more and more concerned about the growing totalitarian power of the new modernizers. The worst disasters and the greatest injury to human rights now stem not from conservative despotism but from modernizing totalitarianism.

We used to think that social and national revolutions were necessary prerequisites for the birth of new democracies, which would be social and cultural as well as political. This idea has become unacceptable. The end of our century is dominated by the collapse of the revolutionary illusion, both in the late capitalist countries and in the former colonies.

But if revolutions move in a direction diametrically opposed to that of democracy, this does not mean that democracy and liberalism necessarily go together. Democracy is as far removed from liberalism as it is from revolution, for both liberal and revolutionary regimes, despite their differences, have one principle in

common: they both justify political action because it is consistent with natural logic.

Revolutionaries want to free social and national energies from the shackles of the capitalist profit motive and of colonial rule. Liberals call for the rational pursuit of interests and satisfaction of needs. The parallel goes even further. Revolutionary regimes subject the people to "scientific" decisions by avant-garde intellectuals, while liberal regimes subject it to the power of entrepreneurs and of the "enlightened" classes—the only ones capable of rational behaviour, as the French statesman Guizot thought in the nineteenth century.

But there is a crucial difference between these two types of regime. The revolutionary approach leads to the establishment of an all-powerful central authority controlling all aspects of social life. The liberal approach, on the other hand, hastens the functional differentiation of the various areas of life—politics, religion, economics, private life and art. This reduces rigidity and allows social and political conflict to develop—which soon restricts the power of the economic giants.

But the weakness of the liberal approach is that by yoking together economic modernization and political liberalism it restricts democracy

***Démocratie* (1991), mixed technique (rope on canvas), by Hamid, a Moroccan painter living in Martinique.**

to the richest, most advanced and best-educated nations. In other words, elitism in the international sphere parallels social elitism in the national sphere. This tends to give a governing elite of middle-class adult men in Europe and America enormous power over the rest of the world—over women, children and workers at home, as well as over colonies or dependent territories.

One effect of the expanding power of the world's economic centres is to propagate the spirit of free enterprise, commercial consumption and political freedom. Another is a growing split within the world's population between the central and the peripheral sectors—the latter being not that of the subject peoples but of outcasts and marginals. Capital, resources, people and ideas migrate from the periphery and find better employment in the central sector.

The liberal system does not automatically, or naturally, become democratic as a result of redistribution of wealth and a constantly rising standard of general social participation. Instead it works like a steam engine, by virtue of a big difference in potential between a hot pole and a cold pole. While the idea of class war, often disregarded nowadays, no longer applies to post-revolutionary societies, it still holds good as a description of aspects of liberal society that are so basic that the latter cannot be equated with democracy.

The twilight of social democracy

This analysis is in apparent contradiction with the fact that social democracy developed in the most capitalist countries, where there was a considerable redistribution of income as a result of intervention by the state, which appropriated almost half the national income—and in some cases, especially in the Scandinavian countries, even more.

The main strength of the social democratic idea stems from the link it has forged between democracy and social conflict, which makes the working-class movement the main driving-force in building a democracy, both social and political. This shows that there can be no democracy unless the greatest number subscribes to the central principles of a society and culture—but also no democracy without fundamental social conflicts.

What distinguishes the democratic position from both the revolutionary and the liberal position is that it combines these two principles. But the social democratic variant of these principles is now growing weaker, partly because the central societies are emerging from industrial society and entering post-industrial

society or a society without a dominant model, and partly because we are now witnessing the triumph of the international market and the weakening of state intervention, even in Europe.

So Swedish social democracy, and most parties modelled on social democracy, are anxiously wondering what can survive of the policies constructed in the middle of the century. In some countries the trade union movement has lost much of its strength and many of its members. This is particularly true in France, the United States and Spain, but also in the United Kingdom—to say nothing of the ex-communist countries, where trade unions long ago ceased to be an independent social force. In nearly all countries trade unionism is moving out of the industrial workplace and turning into neocorporatism, a mechanism for protecting particular professional interests within the machinery of the state: and this leads to a back-

A symbolic image of tradition and modernity. Young Algerians play in front of the shrine of a marabout (a Muslim holy man) and, in background, a natural gas processing plant.

lash in the form of wild-cat strikes and the spread of parallel *ad hoc* organizations.

So we come to the most topical question about democracy: if it presupposes both participation and conflict, but if its social-democratic version is played out, what place does it occupy today? What is the specific nature of democratic action, and what is the "positive" content of democracy? In answering these questions we must first reject any single principle: we must equate human freedom neither with the universalism of pragmatic reason (and hence of interest) nor with the culture of a community. Democracy can neither be solely liberal nor completely popular.

Unlike revolutionary historicism and liberal utilitarianism, democratic thinking today starts from the overt and insurmountable conflict between the two faces of modern society. On the one hand is the liberal face of a continually changing society, whose efficiency is based on the maximization of trade, and on the circulation of money, power, and information. On the other is the opposing image, that of a human being who resists market forces by appealing to subjectivity—the latter meaning both a desire for individual freedom and also a response to tradition, to a collective memory. A society free to arbitrate between these two conflicting demands—that of the free market and that of individual and collective humanity, that of money and that of identity—may be termed democratic.

The main difference as compared with the previous stage, that of social democracy and the industrial society, is that the terms used are much further apart than before. We are now concerned not with employers and wage-earners, associated in a working relationship, but with subjectivity and the circulation of symbolic goods.

These terms may seem abstract, but they are no more so than employers and wage-earners. They denote everyday experiences for most people in the central societies, who are aware that they live in a consumer society at the same time as in a subjective world. But it is true that these conflicting facets of people's lives have not so far found organized political expression—just as it took almost a century for the political categories inherited from the French Revolution to be superseded by the class categories specific to industrial society. It is this political time-lag that so often compels us to make do with a negative definition of democracy.

Arbitration

Democracy is neither purely participatory nor purely liberal. It above all entails arbitrating, and this implies recognition of a central conflict between tendencies as dissimilar as investment and participation, or communication and subjectivity. This concept can be adapted to the most affluent post-industrializing countries and to those which dominate the world system; but does it also apply to the rest of the world, to the great majority of the planet?

A negative reply would almost completely invalidate the foregoing argument. But in Third World countries today arbitration must first and foremost find a way between exposure to world markets (essential because it determines competitiveness) and the protection of a personal and collective identity from being devalued or becoming an arbitrary ideological construct.

Let us take the example of the Latin American countries, most of which fall into the category of intermediate countries. They are fighting hard and often successfully to regain and then increase the share of world trade they

once possessed. They participate in mass culture through consumer goods, television programmes, production techniques and educational programmes. But at the same time they are reacting against a crippling absorption into the world economic, political and cultural system which is making them increasingly dependent. They are trying to be both universalist and particularist, both modern and faithful to their history and culture.

Unless politics manages to organize arbitration between modernity and identity, it cannot fulfil the first prerequisite of democracy, namely to be representative. The result is a dangerous rift between grass-roots movements seeking to defend the individuality of communities, and political parties, which are no more than coalitions formed to achieve power by supporting a candidate.

The main difference between the central countries and the peripheral ones is that in the former a person is defined primarily in terms of personal freedom, but also as a consumer, whereas in the latter the defence of collective identity may still be more important, to the extent that there is pressure from abroad to impose some kind of bloodless revolution in the form of compulsory modernization on the pattern of other countries.

This conception of democracy as a process of arbitration between conflicting components of social life involves something more than the idea of majority government. It implies above all recognition of one component by another, and of each component by all the others, and hence an awareness both of the similarities and the differences between them. It is this that most sharply distinguishes the "arbitral" concept from the popular or revolutionary view of democracy, which so often carries with it the idea of eliminating minorities or categories opposed to what is seen as progress.

In many parts of the world today there is open warfare between a kind of economic modernization which disrupts the fabric of society, and attachment to beliefs. Democracy cannot exist so long as modernization and identity are regarded as contradictory in this way. Democracy rests not only on a balance or compromise between different forces, but also on their partial integration. Those for whom progress means making a clean sweep of the past and of tradition are just as much the enemies of democracy as those who see modernization as the work of the devil. A society can only be democratic if it recognizes both its unity and its internal conflicts.

Hence the crucial importance, in a democratic society, of the law and the idea of justice, defined as the greatest possible degree of compatibility between the interests involved. The prime criterion of justice is the greatest possible freedom for the greatest possible number of actors. The aim of a democratic society is to produce and to respect the greatest possible amount of diversity, with the participation of the greatest possible number in the institutions and products of the community. ❑

Search for identity **(1989), elmwood sculpture by the French artist Francis Cuny.**

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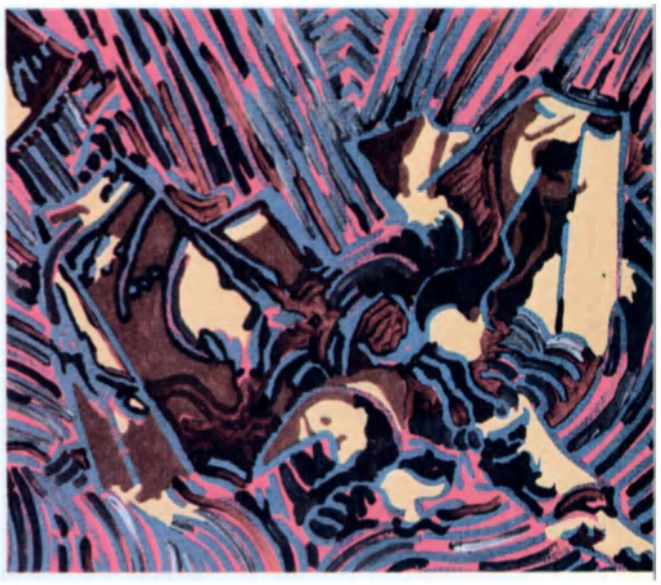
A QUESTION OF STANDARDS

by Amin Maalouf



Right, *Two worlds* (1991), by the Swiss painter and photographer Patrick Mina, symbolizes the North and South in turmoil.

On a trip to Prague in early January 1990, a few days after the fall of Ceausescu, I saw a poster in front of the Romanian Embassy that read: "Ceausescu, there is no room in Europe for you!"

I was both amused and shocked. Did it mean that there *is* room for dictators and despots in other continents? It was, admittedly, only a naive slogan invented by some demonstrator or other. But whether or not it is formulated in so many words, the idea exists, and I would be inclined to say that most people believe it. Despotism and disrespect for human rights are somehow less shocking when they occur in Asia, Africa or in the countries of the South generally. There is a horizontal dividing line beyond which values are different, as if some other variety of the human race were concerned. The end of the period of East-West confrontation has only magnified this apparent division.

In the thrill of reunion and justifiably proud at seeing the triumph of certain values, Europe runs the risk of forgetting the rest of the world, which is now regarded in some quarters as being politically unimportant and economically beyond redemption. It is a strong possibility that in the next fifteen years Europe will be so preoccupied with the reconstruction of its central and southern regions that it will have no time for the rest of the world, with which its relations will be antagonistic.

Putting the "common European home" in order must obviously come first. However, since the European model is currently the only credible universal model we have, it cannot be confined to one continent. Europeanism is a great idea, but humanism is a much greater one. As for Eurocentrism, it is a short-sighted view of things which is liable sooner or later to dash today's hopes.

Does this mean that Europe must impose its model on everyone else? Perhaps not, but it is Europe's duty to accept certain conditions in its relations with the rest of the world. The first of these conditions is that the countries of the South, which depend on the North for their economic survival and arms supplies, should be forced to desist from any form of despotism, infringement of liberty, and excessive militarization. Conditions now exist which can make it impossible for any despotic regime to survive and which can establish new standards of behaviour throughout the world. Only a short time ago the rivalry between the two big military and ideological blocs meant that the attainment of such standards was a utopian dream. Today despotism, torture, oppression, racism and warmongering can be outlawed. There is no longer any justification for supporting dictators on the grounds that they provide a bulwark against communism, or on any other such pretext.

It is true that some politicians and businessmen may be tempted to turn a blind eye to the behaviour of rulers who look kindly on their interests. But the role of public opinion—that is to say of the media, intellectuals and citizen groups—is to ensure that these standards are unfailingly observed.

In various parts of the world, only democracy can put an end to military adventurism and pave the way for the settlement of conflicts. Moreover, economic development cannot be seriously contemplated without the rule of law. The idea that despotism is a prelude to development has seldom been supported by events; it has far more often delayed or truncated the process by stifling a society's vitality.

We are always being told that a new era has begun. We were told this after the First World War, and again after the Second. On each occasion, reorganization of the world by the victors turned out to be a disastrous prelude to fresh conflicts. Will our own post-war era be any different? Can we prevent the failure of misguided internationalist ideas from leading to acceptance of the excesses of nationalism? Or prevent the collapse of misguided egalitarianism from justifying the excesses of runaway liberalism?

Will our generation write an epilogue worthy of this sublime and terrifying century? And a preamble to the centuries ahead? ❑

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PROMISE AND UNCERTAINTY

by Elikia M'Bokolo

DURING the pre-colonial period, those political units in Africa that had no developed state structures were gradually absorbed, in an increasingly brutal way, into larger groupings that had. African societies thereby learned that any authority tends to arrogate to itself as much power as it can, and that every state, if left uncontrolled, tends to abuse its power.

Secession was one of the oldest forms of protest. Dissident individuals or groups would switch their allegiance to rulers renowned for their tolerance, or more often would set up new units that responded better to the people's aspirations to liberty and autonomy.

Forms of political control varied between cultures, but one characteristic common to most traditional societies was the sanctity of kingship. A connection was made between on the one hand the welfare of the world and the community and on the other the physical and moral state of the king, who was held accountable for every economic, political or ecological crisis. Royal failings, such as erratic and anti-social behaviour, were punishable. The holder of supreme power would pay the supreme penalty. These practices seem to have functioned in many parts of the continent and tempered many abuses.

In the nineteenth century a more complex form of state organization came into being. Most states opted for a federal rather than a centralized system, at least until belated attempts were made to enforce unification on the eve of colonization. Once they had proclaimed their allegiance to the king and had accepted such obligations as paying taxes and providing soldiers for the army, the local units—villages, ancient kingdoms or tribes—kept their own laws, customs, language and religious practices.

There are indications that this political model still lingers in people's memories. It is remarkable that one factor in current demands for democracy has been the desire to set up—or restore—federal structures in many states. This may reflect a departure from the centralization inherited from the colonial era (in the French- and Portuguese-speaking countries) or its immediate aftermath (primarily in the English-speaking ones), but perhaps it also suggests a determination to return to older traditions.

With the coming of colonialism, collective resistance began to express itself in new fields—against foreign domination and harsh exploitation. For too long a heroic, elitist vision credited this resistance to modern political parties, intellectual leaders and administrators produced under colonization, and to the future "fathers of the nation". In fact the most enduring resistance came, throughout the colonial period, from "stateless societies" that opposed the forces of occupation and the new forms of subjection imposed by the Europeans in much the same way as they had resisted pressure from the great nineteenth-century African state structures.

The most perceptive colonialists were aware that societies of this type were unfailingly hostile to all forms of oppression. Governor Gabriel Angoulvant, who was responsible for the "pacification" of the Ivory Coast, noted that "One of the greatest difficulties we have encountered in establishing our influence lies in the attitude of the natives or, to put it bluntly, in the moral condition of the country. . . . The previous state of anarchy, which had real advantages for savage populations, is still too persistent among the natives of the centre of

***Liberté 2* (1989), woven fabric by the Senegalese artist Alioune Badiane.**

the colony and the lower Ivory Coast. It has left profound traces everywhere, and its gradual disappearance is causing too many regrets for all its effects to disappear."

By the late nineteenth century, the political struggle of educated Africans and the urban working classes was beginning to make an impact in Senegal, South Africa, Ghana and Nigeria. At first the colonial authorities contained the agitation within the bounds of a mild reformism, and opposition only really took off after the Second World War, when the rural population began to rally to the new political parties. It was then that the colonizers reluctantly agreed to reform the colonial system—before being forced to wind it up altogether.

Many forms of resistance helped to shatter the colonial edifice: opposition from the syncretic churches and Messianic movements;

workers' strikes and mutinies among the police; insurrections in rural areas and armed rebellions, almost always led by self-proclaimed religious revivalists; communist ideologies and methods imported from Europe (notably into South Africa, French West Africa and the Portuguese colonies); and non-violent resistance, which was particularly widespread in Ghana.

The diversity of these home-grown and imported forms of opposition illustrates the extent of resistance within African societies, as well as their capacity for invention. They contained the demands for democracy that were a feature of this phase of history and are in many cases re-emerging today. Overt and covert forms of racism were rejected. So too were all kinds of discrimination based on ethnic or religious criteria or on a so-called respect for cultural sensibilities which was nothing more than racism in a subtle and shameful disguise. Demands for sovereignty were made. There was a desire to replace unapproachable bureaucracies in distant capitals with effective participation in public affairs. In material terms Africans aspired to enjoy a minimum of available wealth. Culturally they sought the richest possible experience of modern artistic creation and knowledge.

The most sincere and clear-sighted leaders of the independence movements, men such as Patrice Lumumba and, later, Amilcar Cabral, expressed all these aspirations. More often, however, the politicians who rose to head (or were placed at the head of) these movements emphasized the legal and political side of the struggle. Kwame Nkrumah, one of the most fervently nationalistic of them all, told his followers "Seek ye first the political kingdom, and all other things shall be added onto it".

In practice, the citizens of the new nations rarely found the political kingdom, still less what was to be added onto it. One-party systems proliferated in the post-independence period. In many lands, the old colonial set-up was re-established under a new name and on different pretexts. Everywhere the people grew poorer at a time when most of the leaders were feathering their nests.

The notion of "second independence" sometimes used to describe the demands and struggles of today neatly expresses the continuity between past and present discontent. Continuity does not, however, imply that slogans, aspirations or political programmes are necessarily the same. On the contrary, it seems that unsatisfied earlier aspirations have been absorbed into fresh ones. This suggests that the present situation is serious and that irreversible processes are now under way in a group of states which are all, as it were, several revolutions behind and pregnant with major reforms that have yet to be born.

Fresco depicting a Bamileke chief and his court (Cameroon).

A LONG HISTORY OF INTERNAL DISSENT

The actors who now dominate the African political scene and are imposing a long overdue process of democratization are merely going through a crucial stage in what J. Copans has called a "long march", the first steps of which can be traced back to the disillusionment that followed independence. Since the 1960s, peasants, young people, intellectuals, women, the urban working classes, and professional politicians have all, with varying degrees of intensity at different times and in different countries, tried to change the course of events.

Specialists in African history and political sociology have tended to pay little heed to these counter-movements and voices of dissent. It is only in the last decade that they have begun to pay attention to grassroots politics and popular dissidence, and by that time the bandwagon was already moving at speed.

In the early 1960s, the Congo (today Zaïre) was engulfed in peasant rebellions against a state that was identified with bureaucratic centralization, technocratic and authoritarian modernization, neo-colonialism, fiscal extortion and corruption. Disturbances in the towns and cities, whether organized by workers (as in the case of the resignation of Abbé Fulbert Youlou in Congo in 1963) or by school students like those which led to the downfall of Jean Bedel Bokassa in the Central African Empire in 1979, brought down a number of regimes that exemplified the worst features of the post-colonial period.

Even supposedly stable regimes, which were for that reason attractive to Western investors, had to cope with endemic protest in forms ranging from student and teacher discontent, to remonstrations from Christian and syncretic churches and from Muslim brotherhoods, and repeated criticisms from intellectuals and artists, who have had a greater impact than is often thought.

A number of artists have done much to instil in young people the spirit of radical criticism that is widespread today. The songs of the Nigerian musician Fela, with their vitriolic descriptions of the acquisitive lifestyle of the Nigerian middle class, are one example. Another is the Congolese singer Zao, whose less overtly political works nonetheless praise such forbidden notions as antimilitarism and pacifism, describe the difficulties of city life, and deduce from the equality of all people in the face of death the same equality for the living.

The movement towards democracy accelerated rapidly in the 1980s, for reasons that have yet to be fully analysed. Many commentators have pointed to the wind blowing at gale force from Eastern Europe or to factors such as the "Gorbachev effect" or the "Ceausescu effect".

But why not look at events in Africa itself?. On the positive side, for instance, there was a "Senghor effect", proving that a one-party regime could move without mishap towards multi-party democracy. There was also a "Mandela effect". On the other side of the coin were the "Bokassa effect", which showed how a regime actively supported by a great power could be brought down by a movement triggered by students, and the "Idi Amin effect", the toppling of an archetypal bloodthirsty dictatorship by a long civil war.

The autocratic oligarchies are on the defensive. But though they may be shaky, they are still on their feet. And so the extraordinary diversity of current forms of struggle illustrates two things: the inventiveness of the champions of democracy, and also the resilience and adaptability of the existing regimes.

The number of civil wars and latent civil wars shows that, for many leaders, the current situation is no more than a repeat of earlier forms of agitation. At worst it is a transitional period to be got through with a minimum of damage by means of a judicious combination of intransigence and vague promises.

Paths of transition

The increasingly hard line taken by several governments may be the swan-song of dying regimes. Nevertheless these regimes are one of the great question marks hanging over the transition to democracy in Africa. Other are trying to prolong their hold on power by means of a constitutional facelift.

One course that was followed in the late 1970s with the support of the Western powers, which had no desire to lose partners with a reputation for reliability, was for countries to "liberalize" their ruling parties without calling into question the principle of the one-party state or the quasi-dynastic nature of the regimes. In some cases, however, this provided an opportunity for part of the political class to

detach itself permanently from government. Moreover, the revelation of all kinds of scandal entailed many risks. By the start of the 1980s, most regimes had abandoned this experiment.

Another model entails the imposition from above of a multi-party system controlled by those in power. African statesmen who choose this model seem to think that controlled democratization paying lip-service to the principle of multi-party choice can protect the long-term interests of the ruling oligarchy more securely than thorough-going authoritarian rule. But there have been surprises, as we saw recently in Cape Verde, where President Aristides Pereira and the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde, which had been in power since independence in 1975, went over to a multi-party system in 1990 and lost a general election held in January 1991.

Another phenomenon is to use a "national conference" as an original framework for a painless transition to democracy. National conferences, the first of which was called to extricate the rulers of Benin from a political and economic crisis caused by a wave of strikes that had brought the country to a halt, subsequently spread like wildfire throughout Africa. Two were held in 1990 (in Benin and Gabon) and five in 1991 (in Congo, Mali, Togo, Niger and Zaïre). In other countries, notably Cameroon and the Central African Republic, the call for a national conference is the main plank in the opposition platform.

The first of its kind, the Benin national conference was hastily organized and was dominated by a technocratic emphasis on legal formalities and economic detail. Its chief business was to neutralize a corrupt and worn-out ruling group, so as to have access to credit from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and France. A similar process took place in Gabon and possibly in Mali.

In Congo, on the other hand, the conference lasted three whole months, against the wishes of the international financial organizations. Regarded by some as an interminable African talking shop, in many ways the Brazzaville conference set an example for others. The French historian Jean Chesneaux recently pointed out, correctly, that any truly participatory democracy is time-consuming.

The time taken from coping with economic emergencies and from the efficient despatch of business was devoted to an in-depth scrutiny, unprecedented in Africa, of the nation's history. In Africa's present state of moral, political and economic bankruptcy, there is a need for stock-taking. Here, for the first time, a whole country uncompromisingly examined the most recent, and hence most shadowy and contro-

People from town and country assemble for a public meeting in Basutoland in 1960, six years before independence.

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versial, phase of its history, one during which a one-party state had decreed a monopoly over information and its interpretation.

In my view, if democracy is the non-conflictual resolution of social conflicts, it requires a certain minimum of consensus to achieve that end. No consensus has as much force as one based on lucidity and a common interpretation of crucial moments in a nation's history. It is still too early to appreciate the full significance of the new symbolism used at the conference, which mingled Christian concepts of forgiveness with the specifically African pagan rite of "the washing of hands" above the tomb of the ancestors after making confession. This act traditionally sanctioned the renewal of social bonds and the establishment of a new social contract enabling the members of the community to continue to live together and respect clearly stated common values.

But many obstacles lie ahead. Perhaps they are part of Africa's economic and social situation. What should be a cause for anxiety is not so much the economic crisis, which by definition cannot last for ever, as the structure of economies long shaped by the demands of an unequal division of labour and earnings. The working people of Africa drew no profit from economic growth during the 1960s and 1970s. They know that the supposed reforms devised by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have not solved any of Africa's development problems, since their aim is to redress the external imbalances of the African economies. Their social effects, on the other hand, have been very serious for most of the population.

A COMMON LABORATORY

There is therefore a serious short-term risk that almost before the gulf separating the people from the authoritarian oligarchs has been bridged, another one will open between a ruling class committed to technocratic modernization and the mass of the population. If it does, the people will feel that they have again been denied their "revolution".

Another major obstacle is the territorial structure of the African states, which were shaped a century—in some cases only decades—ago, at the whim of Western diplomats, to suit the interests of the great powers. Ethnic and regional problems are everywhere in evidence.

In the 1960s, the Katanga and Kasai dramas in Zaïre and the Biafra trauma in Nigeria, all of them involving outside intervention, led African political and intellectual elites to wholeheartedly condemn "regionalism" and "tribalism". Things are very different today. Frantic centralization

in the name of the nation-state has been one of the foundations of the dictatorships that are now embroiled in crisis. Ethnic and regional discontent in Ethiopia, Angola, Congo, Zaïre and Togo has, on the other hand, stimulated calls for democracy. Ethnic parties represent a considerable risk, but so does a form of Jacobinism that in Africa as elsewhere would represent the triumph of a technocratic bureaucracy over a participatory democracy that would invest at least a minimum of power and responsibility in local hands.

The struggles, achievements, difficulties and questions described above indicate that Africa today is not so much a confused battlefield as a laboratory. Will it be a laboratory which will concentrate on its own specific and intractable situation, while others look on or at best offer encouragement? Or, in the heat of events, will Africa become a forum where new questions of universal importance can be addressed and where democratic demands and formulae of universal relevance can be worked out?

Many people both within and outside Africa tend to look upon the continent as a unique case. How convincing are their arguments?

Now that the foreign loans raised by the post-independence governments have been exhausted, at devastating cost for the peoples of Africa, it looks as if African countries are becoming introverted, turning back again to their own political cultures, and testing the powers of creativity and invention of both urban elites and villagers. There is a desire for mutual exchange and contact among African countries. From Cotonou to Kinshasa, from Douala to Antananarivo, from Brazzaville to Niamey, from Monrovia to Addis Ababa, from Bangui to Johannesburg, the similarities seem striking: in each place the cast in the social drama is the same, there are the same forms of mobilization, confrontation and negotiation.

However, I should like to correct this impression of an introverted Africa and to put this appearance of total originality into perspective. Africa is currently experiencing problems that both the old democratic states and the many countries of the "South" and "East" which are now coming to democracy also have to solve. There are three main problems. The first is that of the relationship between formal representative democracy (with all the attendant risks of the confiscation of power by experts, technocrats and politicians, all of whom are nonetheless necessary to the process) and the indispensable role of citizens in controlling and participating in power. The second is that of achieving a balance between centres of power, such as parliaments and governments, and the places where life is lived (businesses, residential neighbourhoods, villages and regions). Here the settling of the ethnic question is paramount. Thirdly, there is the question of harmonizing, in the exercise and guarantee of democracy, "national" territories and wider community-type groupings.

But Africa also needs to establish new bonds to strengthen a democratic world order. This will only come about on two conditions. On the one hand, colonial practices which have always played into the hands of the African dictatorships must be repudiated. On the other, aggressive and insidious forms of ideological and political paternalism must be done away with. ❑

A session of the National Assembly in Lagos (Nigeria) in 1983, following the re-election of President Shehu Shagari.

Opposite page, *The Artisan of Freedom* (1991), a colour lithograph, with highlighting and collages, by the Brazilian painter Sergio Ferro.

FREEDOM FOR THE HAVE-NOTS

by Fernando Henrique Cardoso

IN Brazil there has long been a profound conviction that democracy is a political system that does not easily take root in underdeveloped countries. And yet for long periods in its history Brazil itself has had a formal democratic system. In the nineteenth century the Empire coexisted with parliamentary government, and in the present century, except for the periods between 1937 and 1945 and 1964 and 1985, there have always been elections and a plurality of political parties. The fact remains that people have always tended to emphasize the problems of democracy rather than its stability and the strength of its roots. The noted Brazilian historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda liked to say that democracy "is a delicate plant, and has great difficulty growing in the tropics".

In the so-called Third World countries, even when a regime has had leaders chosen on the basis of elections between representatives of different parties, it has always been criticized by someone, not without justification, on the grounds of its "elitist" or "oligarchical" character. In such cases, fragile democratic institutions were confronted with political realities such as the existence of systems of patronage, lack of real freedom for society's underdogs, and the artificiality of political parties.

These criticisms contain an element of truth. But in the light of world events during the last ten years, I wonder whether it is not the dictatorships and authoritarian regimes rather than the democracies that have turned out to be fragile. Dictatorships, as recent history shows, end up being less durable than democracy, which is increasingly becoming a universal value.

In his "Dictionary of Politics",[1] Norberto Bobbio reviews the various meanings of the word democracy from ancient Greece to the present day, and concludes by emphasizing the dichotomy between democracy as an egalitarian ideal and democracy as a method—in other words between democracy as a value and democracy as a mechanism. But his comments were made before the current great debate about the transition to democracy in eastern Europe. If he were writing now, he would perhaps comment that it is vain to think of merging these two meanings of democracy.

Nevertheless, I think he would primarily emphasize the key role of freedom, both in theory and in practice. It is freedom, far more than a definition of new rules of democracy, that has fostered the democratization process in eastern Europe, led to the downfall of anachronistic dictatorships in Greece, Spain and

Portugal, and encouraged the fight against authoritarianism in Latin America. It still motivates the struggle for democratization, particularly in Asia and some of the newly industrialized countries such as the Republic of Korea.

All the same, we need to analyse rather more deeply the different processes of transition to democracy that are taking place today. I shall confine myself to those in Latin America, with which I am directly acquainted, but I shall compare them with those in eastern Europe. Apart from the aspirations to freedom which are common to them both, I see only differences between them.

In Poland in 1981 I observed at first hand the final stage of the events which led to the Gdansk agreements between Lech Walesa and the management of the Lenin naval shipyard. I drove to Gdansk from Warsaw, where I was attending a meeting of the International Sociological Association, in order to take a closer look at the strike. I remember that what surprised and even shocked me were the symbols displayed in the streets—effigies of the Pope, Polish flags from pre-people's democracy days, and lighted candles. Was this a return to the past?

Then I remembered the events of May 1968 in France, which took place while I was a professor of sociology at the University of Nanterre just outside Paris. On the barricades in Paris, at demonstrations by students, workers and others, the *Internationale* was always sung. *"Debout, ô damnés de la terre!"* ("Arise ye starvelings from your slumbers!") intoned well-fed crowds led by young people waving black anarchist flags.

The antecedents of the two movements, like their socio-economic contexts, were different. But they shared the same mixture of symbols, simultaneously contemporary and anachronistic, which sought to express a message that still lacked a vocabulary and a fixed grammar. In each case there was a powerful reaction against ossified structures and a tremendous longing to turn over a page of history.

Making the transition to democracy

But the quest for greater freedom is not the only factor in contemporary history. There are others, including components of what I call substantive democracy (to distinguish it from formal democracy), which implies health, education and general welfare for the masses. Yet both in eastern Europe and in Latin America, despite their different situations, efforts to build a democratic political system come up against the same agonizing problem: can democracy exist in a society paralysed by an economy in which penury is rife?

Before answering this crucial question, we need to be clear about the differences between the forms of transition to democracy found in the two regions. In Latin America the transition has neither jeopardized the market economy nor sought to change it; indeed, the changes that have occurred there have strengthened the market. In eastern Europe the situation is totally different: as well as acquiring more freedom and more democratic rules, society and the economy must also be rebuilt.

In the Latin American countries, attempts to reform society and the economy take place in the context of an already existing civil society, competition between companies, and efforts to move away from a system of patronage which pervades the world of politics. Latin American societies are much more like those of western Europe and the United States than those of eastern Europe where (particularly in the ex-USSR, which experienced seventy years of communist government), civil society has to be recreated from scratch.

In order to move into the democratic phase, the first item on the political agenda must be to

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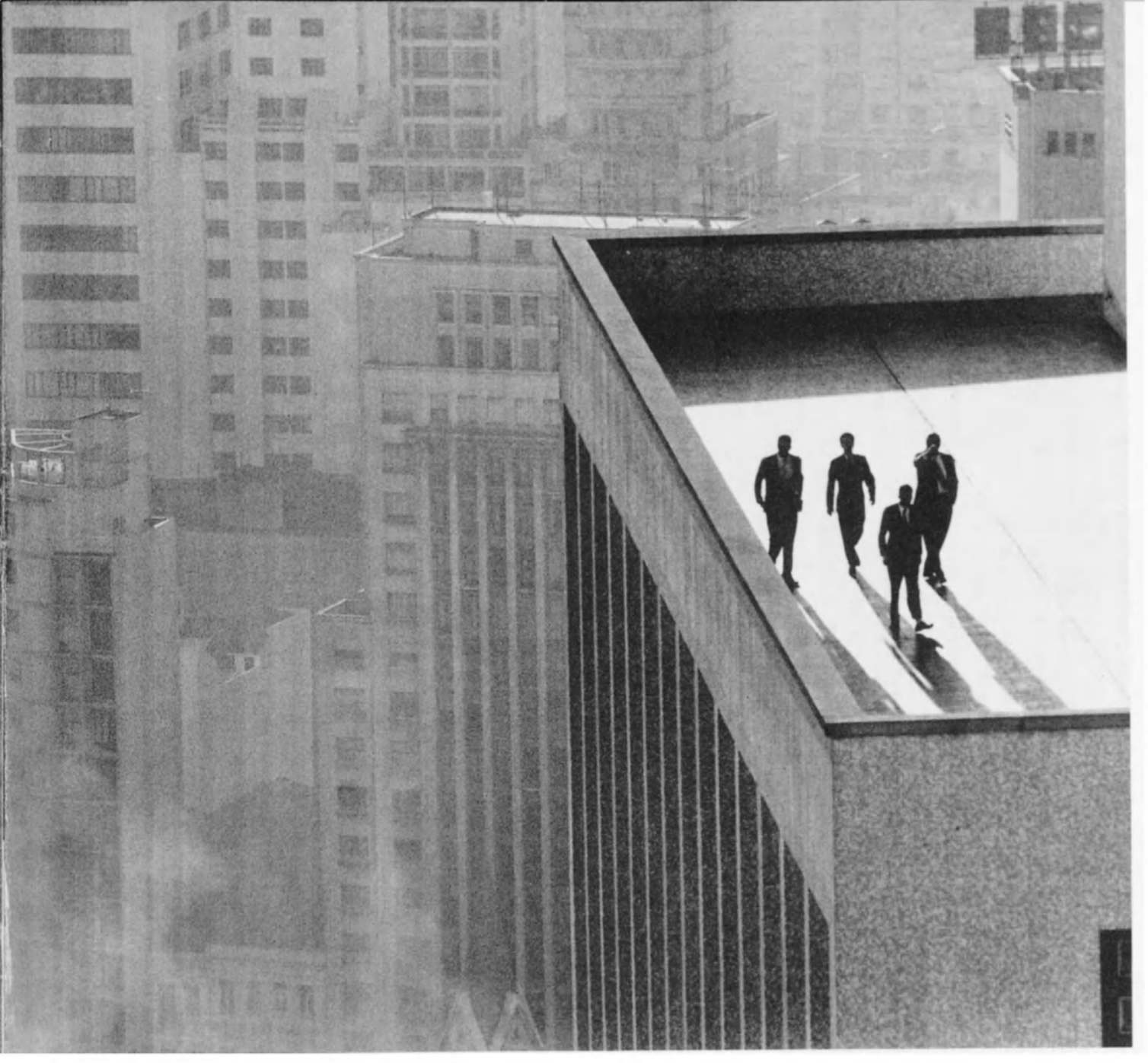

São Paulo, Brazil's biggest city.

channel the urge for freedom into the construction of state and non-state institutions which fit into the Madisonian tradition of checks and balances. In a way this is easier to achieve in Latin America, where the state, even if authoritarian, has not destroyed the market and non-state organizations have been preserved, than it is in eastern Europe, where the democratic drive comes from limited sections of the intelligentsia and groups within the dominant party "contaminated" by the new ideas. But what really set the ball rolling was the aspiration of the masses for freedom and consumer goods.

In Latin America, since major economic reforms had not been introduced and the back of the dictatorships (i.e. the military) had not been broken, the transition boiled down to a mammoth negotiation between the old masters and the new and there has been no real break in continuity. In terms of institutions, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and even Paraguay, had to revert to democratic practices and curb the influence of the old rulers without excluding them altogether.

The forces working for democracy in Latin America met resistance from within the state, but found support in the already existing civil society which coexisted with the dictatorship (trade unions, universities, companies, the media and even political parties). In eastern Europe, on the other hand, when the party-state broke up, civil society had to be completely reinvented, not reinstated.

Here I should like to mention a thesis that is relevant today, although many democrats dislike it. It is based on the theory of elites of the Moravian-born U.S. economist Joseph Schumpeter, who believed that democracy exists when rival groups struggle for power and compete for votes. Voting not only has to be introduced, but competition has to be organized by elites which identify objectives and put them to

November 1989: hands of East and West Germans tearing down barbed wire from the top of the Berlin Wall.

the people, who make a choice. Rules made by the majority are observed, and minorities respected. Continuity and alternation in what the Italian sociologist and jurist Gaetano Mosca calls the "political class" are not only guaranteed but prescribed by electoral competition.

FREEDOM—EVEN ON AN EMPTY STOMACH

Now in both Latin America and eastern Europe dictatorships have wrought havoc in the sense that they have largely destroyed elites. Reconstructing these elites is a necessary precondition for the revival of democratic institutions. Learning how to manage social groups and get them to express their feelings and interests without falling into blind corporatism is a long and thankless process; but it is the essential tool for any democratization.

This brings me to the crux of the matter: the rising tide of popular demands. Democratization by definition opens the floodgates of society. What happens then? In eastern Europe, where totalitarianism was stronger and inequalities are less pronounced, popular demands are for more freedom and participation, and so are aimed mainly at the state and government. In Latin America, where inequalities are glaring, demands are for better jobs, better pay and better public services.

But in both cases penury is intolerable when it goes beyond limits set by the people and by the capacity of productive forces to satisfy demand. Here the debate about substantive democracy and formal democracy crops up again, although in different terms. The prospects for constructing a democratic political system in which people enjoy a full range of freedoms are reduced where there is no prosperity. In eastern Europe libertarian aspirations have until now meant that democratic values have been preserved even on an empty stomach; but in Latin America, where inflation and unemployment are rife, and crises, exhaustion of public funds and a large external debt are commonplace, the maintenance of an open and democratic society is a tour de force.

This is the finest lesson the twentieth century can pass on to the next millennium. We have discovered the fragility of dictatorships, and also that peoples nowadays want freedom, even on short commons. They are ready to endure penury because they realize that lack of freedom offers them only an ersatz prosperity and robs them of the benefits of citizenship. But beyond a certain threshold the necessary correlation between formal democracy and substantive democracy becomes unavoidable. ❑

1 N. Bobbio, N. Matteucci and G. Pasquilo, *Dicionário de politica,* Brasilia, Editora Universidade, 1986.

GREENWATCH

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EDITORIAL

Let's make the world a cleaner place

by France Bequette

THE best way to avoid drowning in our own waste is to produce as little of it as possible. This calls for efficient technology and investment, but there is no time to lose. The automobile industry has already taken some steps in the search for a solution. There are 500 million vehicles on the planet, 80 per cent of which are private cars. Most manufacturers are now showing some concern about the ugly wrecks that disfigure the environment everywhere from Mali to Sri Lanka. It is easy to recast scrap metal and to recycle plastic parts. One multinational corporation is offering an 85 per cent recyclable model. The big German car-makers are using recyclability as a sales pitch.

In a recently published brochure, the international organization Greenpeace noted further examples of good practices in other sectors. In Bielefeld, Germany, 90 per cent of the polyvinyl chloride (PVC) used in the construction of public buildings has been replaced by wood, ceramic material, linoleum and clay, a move that has turned out to be particularly cost-effective. In the United States, the city of Portland, Oregon, has banned the use of expanded polystyrene. The 2,200 restaurants that had been serving hamburgers in packaging made of this material have had to find other solutions such as washable crockery or containers made of recycled paper. Most customers approved. A Swedish paper factory uses oxygen to bleach the pulp so as to avoid using chlorine, which affects the ozone layer. Even though the paper is a shade darker than the usual white, publishers have willingly agreed to use it. As a result, Sweden has reduced its use of chlorine by 25 per cent.

In 1989, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched a Cleaner Production Programme, the objectives of which are "to increase worldwide awareness of the cleaner production concept, help governments and industry develop cleaner production programmes, foster the adoption of cleaner production, and facilitate the transfer of cleaner production technologies." The programme contains five features: the International Cleaner Production Information Clearinghouse (ICPIC), which the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) updates continuously; working groups on leather-tanning, solvents, pulp and paper, petroleum, and biotechnology, among other specific topics; a newsletter, Cleaner Production*; training activities for governments and industrialists, and finally, technical assistance for developing countries. This important programme deserves to be more widely known.* ■

PIT POWER

In the United States, a farmers' co-operative in Michigan came up with the unusual idea of using cherry pits as fuel for its fruit-processing plant. Under this plan, 1.5 million kilograms of waste will save $321,000 a year. The pits are shredded, dried, and then compressed into briquettes. Their rich mix of methane, hydrogen and carbon monoxide content is used to fire a boiler, and the steam produced drives a turbine that generates electricity. Among its other advantages, the system reduces waste and saves energy. ■

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND LIFE EXPECTANCY

Rapid industrialization in the last thirty years has led to serious environmental degradation in twelve Brazilian states, where poor air quality, contaminated drinking water, and toxic wastes are a health hazard. Heavy industries such as steel, petroleum, petrochemicals, fertilizers and coal mining, are the leading contributors to pollution. According to Samia El Baroudy, Senior Country Officer for Brazil at the World Bank, "industrial pollution is a very serious problem for the Brazilian people, more so than deforestation. . . . It reduces life expectancy and the productivity of the workforce, while increasing disease and infant mortality." The World Bank has granted loans for the development of environmentally-sound economic growth through a number of projects, ten of which are currently being implemented. Twelve more are in the pipeline. ■

CHEMICAL DUMPING IN THE BALTIC

According to Greenpeace, waste produced by 71 million persons gets poured into the Baltic Sea annually. The landlocked sea also serves as a dump for 200,000 tonnes of carbon chloride per year from the paper industry, 1 million tonnes of nitrogen from fertilizers, and 50,000 tonnes of phosphorus from detergents. ■

DISCOVERING OUR PLANET

Environmental issues are given lively and informative treatment in *Our Planet*, the bi-monthly illustrated magazine of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The 20-page magazine, published in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic, is available free of charge. If you wish to receive it, please send your name and address and an indication of your preferred language version to:

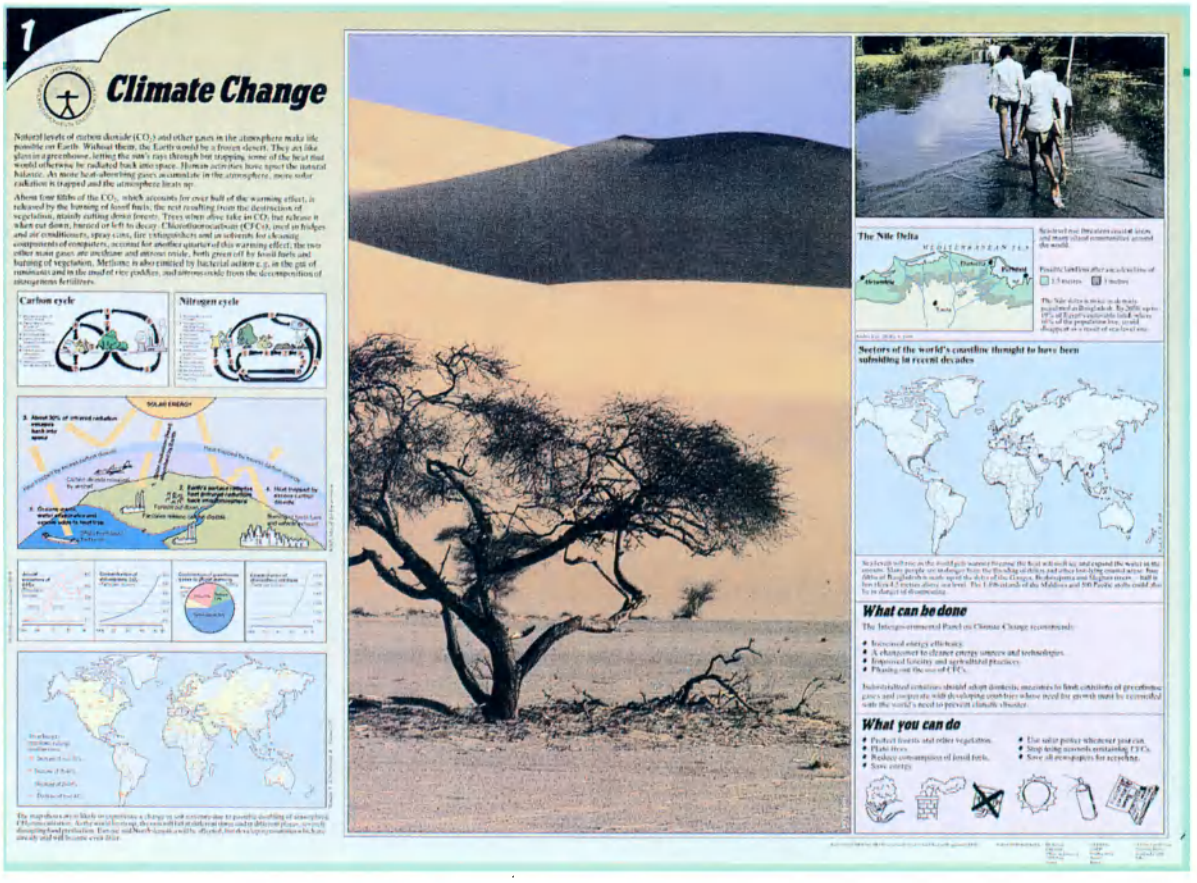
Circulation Manager,
Our Planet, UNEP,
P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi,
Kenya. ■

PREDATORY PLANTS

It is often said that biological diversity is endangered because of demographic growth, expanding human settlements, the impoverishment of ecosystems by people, and the inadequacy of the laws and institutions set up to protect it. Another factor is the rampant growth of certain plants which are introduced into ecosystems and prey on species that are already established there. Two such plants are the tropical alga *Caulerpa taxifolia* in the Mediterranean, and a plant which in Cameroon is called ndognmo, kondengui or Laos weed, and which stifles other vegetation and is of no use to humans or animals. In Australia, a species of St-John's-wort, introduced by a Frenchman nostalgic for a plant that he knew in his homeland, is proliferating and, as it is poisonous to livestock, presents a threat to stockraising. Such thoughtless acts can have incalculable consequences. ■

JUST PUBLISHED: AN NGO DIRECTORY

A bilingual (English/French) Directory of Non-Governmental Environment and Development Organizations in Member Countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been published by the OECD Development Centre in a collaborative effort with the non-governmental organization, ENDA Third World. Its price is US$68, but it can be obtained free of charge by NGOs and development research institutes based in developing countries, provided that their request is accompanied by a description of their activities and that they intend to make the Directory widely available for consultation (e.g. in a library or documentation centre). For further information, please write to OECD Development Centre, External Co-operation, Room 807, 94, rue Chardon-Lagache, 75016 Paris, France. ■



ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AT A GLANCE

A remarkable set of eight posters has been produced by UNESCO and UNEP in the framework of their International Environmental Education Programme. Each poster presents an environmental issue in a nutshell, illustrated with beautiful photos, drawings and diagrams. The eight topics are climate change, fresh water, oceans and coastal areas, deforestation and desertification, biological diversity, the environmental effects of industry, quality of life, and environmental education. The complex issues presented are so clearly explained and laid out that they can be taken in at a glance. The set is distributed to educational institutions free of charge, in English only for the time being, by UNESCO's Environmental Education Section, 7 Place de Fontenoy, F75700 Paris ■

UNESCO COLLECTS 9 MILLION EARTH PLEDGE SIGNATURES

Following a campaign launched by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro, UNESCO has already collected the signatures of over nine million individuals personally committing themselves to the protection of the planet. Director-General Federico Mayor wrote to all UNESCO Member States inviting them to organize seminars in educational institutions in order to get young people involved. Activities for promoting endorsement of the Earth Pledge include the translation of the Pledge into local languages, the organization of seminars, theatrical performances, essay and painting competitions, trips to forests, tree planting, and campaigns to keep schools, cities, and their surroundings clean. UNESCO National Commissions are acting as focal points for the project. ■

DISCOURAGING LONE DRIVERS

America's love affair with the automobile was never any secret in Los Angeles. Built around the car, the Californian megalopolis is the biggest gas guzzler in the world. Its 13 million residents drive 9 million cars over 386 million kilometres a day, using up 68 million litres of gasoline and diesel fuel, and producing 60 per cent of the city's notorious smog. Environmental education programmes aimed at drivers have met with some success though not enough, and so the South Coast Air Quality Management District has further extended its campaign in favour of ride-sharing and carpools, even offering financial incentives. Parking around shopping centres, concert halls or stadiums, for instance, is free or at a discount for carpoolers, while an extra charge is made for lone drivers. Electric cars are also being promoted to help reduce daily fuel consumption. ■

LIVING WITH WASTE

by France Bequette

OUR ancestors used objects made of wood, which rotted, and iron, which rusted. Today we produce durable materials like stainless steel and plastic, but instead of being delighted at how tough they are and holding on to them as long as possible, we throw them away at the earliest opportunity, egged on by manufacturers. In his book *The Waste Makers* the American writer Vance Packard quotes the industrial designer Brook Stevens as saying: "Our whole economy is based on planned obsolescence.... It isn't organized waste. It's a sound contribution to the American economy."

The Garbage Museum at the Meadowlands Environment Centre in New Jersey (United States).

The more developed a country is, the more waste it produces. Waste is an excellent standard-of-living indicator. Because we are generating a rising tide of it and because it is a significant source of pollution, it has also become a major cause for concern to governments all over the planet.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has drawn up the following categories for waste classification: municipal (mainly household) waste; industrial waste; residue from the production of energy; hospital and agricultural waste, mining spoil and demolition debris; dredge spoil, and sewage sludge. (Nuclear wastes are generally dealt with separately.)

We don't all throw away the same amount of garbage. The average person gets rid of 300 kg of waste per year in Italy, 400 kg in Japan, 600 kg in Finland, 860 kg in the United States, and only 180 kg in Yaoundé, Cameroon. But all of these figures are constantly rising.

The results of a survey conducted in France by CREDOC, the French centre for the study and observation of living conditions, give some idea of the kind of things that are thrown out: 34 per cent is organic matter, 30 per cent paper and cardboard, 13 per cent glass, 10 per cent plastic, 7 per cent metal, 4 per cent wood and 2 per cent textiles.

In the industrialized member countries of OECD, where 90 to 100 per cent of garbage collection is carried out by municipal authorities, people tend not to worry about what happens to their household waste. Either it ends up in an official dump, or landfill, or it is taken to an incineration plant. Storage and treatment capacities, however, are under increasing pressure because of the amounts involved—423 million tonnes for the OECD countries alone in 1989. With the spread of the NIMBY ("Not in my back yard") syndrome people are refusing to live in the vicinity of landfills and incineration plants, and it is becoming virtually impossible to build new plants. The odours from landfills, and the endless procession of trucks going to and fro unquestionably represent a serious disamenity to residents in the immediate vicinity, not to mention potential health hazards, which are only now becoming the subject of epidemiological studies. Solutions must be found.

The first solution is to sort out waste at source. Several garbage bins in the kitchen, special containers in the street, and a well-organized selective collection system are keys to efficient recycling and to the conservation of energy and raw materials. Paper, glass and metal can easily be sorted in this way. Plastic, which is totally non-biodegradable, is very difficult to recycle. Organic substances, as anyone who has a garden knows, can be allowed to decay for use as compost to fertilize the soil.

Such an attitude to recycling implies that we should all be aware of the problem and make a daily effort to solve it. This can only become a habit if there is considerable educational back-up. We can do our marketing with our own bags or baskets and refuse to accept plastic bags, which are not a negligible source of pollution. Another solution would be to make it compulsory for stores to take back cartons and other forms of packaging, to encourage the charging of a deposit on glass and even plastic bottles, the re-use of metal and plastic containers and the sale of unpackaged goods.

We have to act now, before we are submerged in our own waste. A recent example concerning the German city of Ulm, in Bavaria, is highly instructive. Ulm was exporting 160 tonnes of household waste daily to two landfills in France, when it came to light that unscrupulous carriers were mixing dangerous hospital or industrial waste into their loads, and some were even secretly dumping them at

***Chuco-Mama* (1990), acrylic on canvas by the Venezuelan painter Rina Blumensztejn. Farmers gathering the fruits of Mother Nature are protected from predatory beasts by a traditional divinity, the snake.**

beauty spots. France decided to call a halt to this traffic. The Ulm authorities could have built an incinerator, but the proposal had been vetoed by environmentalists, who also opposed the establishment of a landfill. Now there is no alternative but to build an incinerator. However, construction will take three years, and during this period, garbage will pile up in and around the city.

The most ordinary garbage bin contains all sorts of hazardous, toxic chemical substances found in solvents, adhesives, batteries, oven cleansers, disinfectants, medicines, pesticides, and other products. Once garbage has been incinerated, the metals in it—such as lead, chrome, mercury or arsenic—remain and can easily filter into the natural environment if the ash is not perfectly stored. ■

FRANCE BEQUETTE
is a Franco-American journalist specializing in environmental questions. Since 1985 she has been associated with the WANAD-UNESCO training programme for African news-agency journalists.

THE HEALTH HAZARD FACTOR

UNEP notes that out of the more than 10 million chemical compounds that have been synthesized worldwide since the turn of the century, 100,000 have been marketed. In addition, between 1,000 and 2,000 new compounds are produced each year. Some of them, such as pesticides or fertilizers, are used straight, but most of them enter into the composition of millions of ordinary consumer goods. Every sector of human activity uses and benefits from these products.

And yet it has been known for thirty years that all chemical products are to some degree hazardous. How seriously they affect health depends on how deadly they are and on the duration of exposure to them. A brief exposure to a tiny amount of dioxin, for instance, is enough to make people ill, whereas they have to be exposed to high doses of ferrous oxide for a long period of time for its ill-effects to be felt. Scientists have recently begun to focus more attention on long-term effects such as birth defects, adverse genetic and neurological changes, and forms of cancer.

A tragic illustration of the consequences of careless waste-dumping occurred in Minamata, on the Japanese island of Kyushu, where between 1956 and 1967 an industrial plant dumped its waste in the sea. The waste contained mercury, which was absorbed by plankton, then by the small fish on which the big ones feed, leading to a mercury concentration in the food chain. As a consequence, 20,000 people were affected by nervous disorders, and 857 of them died. The problem is particularly disturbing since information about the effects on health is available for only 2 per cent of the chemical compounds on the market.

The substances that contaminate soil, water and air can cover long distances, regardless of borders. This is a matter of concern for the whole planet. ■

WHERE DANGER ROAMS

THE world produces 2.1 billion tonnes of industrial waste per year, 338 million tonnes of which are hazardous. A highly industrialized country like the United States contributes 275 million tonnes to the total, compared with only 22,000 tonnes from Thailand. Before the international community became aware of the danger, the least expensive solution had been to dispose of waste anywhere on land or at sea. When the warning signal rang out, another solution appeared, and that was to dump the waste, often under a false identity, in acquiescent host countries. UNEP estimates that 23 tonnes of waste cross the border of an OECD member country every five minutes. The international hazardous-waste trade reached a peak in the 1980s, with the media reporting on the trials and tribulations of ships such as the *Khian Sea* and the *Zanoobia* as they criss-crossed the oceans for months, sometimes for years at a time, seeking a developing country that could be persuaded to accept their cargoes of waste.

Compressed food and drink cans in Tokyo (Japan).

The international organization Greenpeace, whose members condemn these immoral if not illegal practices, has conducted a wide-ranging inquiry, as thorough as a police investigation, and published the findings in 1990 in a 400-page volume. A very poor country like Guinea Bissau would have had to be heroic to turn down four times its Gross National Product and twice its foreign debt in return for accepting 15 million tonnes of industrial waste that could easily be stored on a plain near the Senegalese border. In fact, geological studies revealed that the groundwater in that area is just below the surface, and the Health Minister called for the deal to be suspended.

Another waste-traffic incident took place in 1988 when household waste ash from the city of Philadelphia on the eastern seaboard of the United States was "sold" to Guinea, which was then in the midst of national reconstruction, to manufacture bricks. A 15,000-tonne shipment was unloaded directly onto the ground on the island of Kassa, off Conakry. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) analysed the content of the ash and published a report which was intended to be reassuring but which recommended that the public and unprotected workers should not have access to the area where it was stored. Perhaps because the imported ash was ultimately considered to be a health hazard, or because it was unsuitable for brick-manufacturing, or because of a campaign launched by Guinean television, it was finally shipped back to Philadelphia.

Waste is moved mainly for economic reasons. The "commodity" is handled by mysterious brokers and can yield almost as much profit as gunrunning or drug trafficking without the attendant risks. It is also good business for industrialists to transport their waste to a country with much cheaper storage rates ($40 a tonne in Africa, 25 times more in Europe, and 36 times more in the United States), or where recycling costs less ($20 a tonne in France, as opposed to $100 in Germany). There may be an incentive to avoid the particularly strict regulations applied in so-called "green" countries. The temptation then is to ship waste to the East or the South, because regulations still do not exist in many Third World countries.

And yet, as far back as 1981, a group of experts met in Montevideo, Uruguay, to examine the transport, handling and storage of hazardous waste. In 1984 and 1985, UNEP drew up a series of Guidelines and Principles for Environmentally Sound Management of Hazardous

A Japanese sea-going waste carrier.

Wastes. These efforts crystallized in the 1989 Basel Convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. Although the Convention was adopted by 116 countries and the European Community, it has not yet been ratified by the main waste producing countries—in other words it has not been incorporated into their national law.

The Convention was given an added regional dimension in 1989 by the Lomé IV Convention between African, Caribbean and Pacific nations and the European Community, and by the Bamako Convention in 1991. The Basel Convention, which came into force in 1992, has been criticized as lukewarm, notably by Greenpeace. Waste import and export are still permitted. They are authorized between states that have signed the treaty provided they are preceded by an exchange of detailed information on the intended export and the written consent of the importing country. Bilateral agreements may also be reached by signatory countries with each other and with a non-signatory country, as long as they are "environmentally sound". Even if the Convention is a step in the right direction, there is not a single clause in it, as Greenpeace points out, that bans any transfer of waste (except to the Antarctic), even to a developing country or a country that has more flexible environmental laws than the exporting country. Only time will tell whether the Basel Convention will discourage the sinister trade in hazardous waste once and for all. ■

Enquiries should be addressed to the Interim Secretariat of the Basel Convention,
266 route de Lausanne,
1292 Chambésy (Switzerland)
Telephone: (41 22) 758 25 10
Fax 758 11 89

A TRAINING MANUAL ON HAZARDOUS WASTE

THE UNEP Programme Activity Centre has prepared a remarkable training manual, *Hazardous Waste Policies and Strategies*. A fictitious country, Udanax, is the object of a complete assessment. The nature of its hazardous wastes is examined in detail, along with its facilities for treatment and disposal. One chapter is devoted to an exposition of the Basel Convention and its implementation. The document is clear and straightforward, a model of its kind. It is used at seminars conducted by UNEP for decision-makers and national officials on request by local authorities and with the co-operation of many other organizations. ■

Further information may be obtained from:
UNEP,
Industry and Environment/Programme Activity Centre,
Tour Mirabeau
39-43 quai André Citroën
75739 Paris Cedex 15
Fax: (33 1) 40 58 88 74.

Cover of a collection of Nasrudin Hodja stories translated from Azeri into Russian (1962).

A BIRD IN THE HAND

THE comic stories featuring Nasrudin Hodja, who is thought to have lived in Anatolia in the thirteenth century, are celebrated worldwide for their wry humour. Full of mischief, which led him into all sorts of amusing and sometimes hair-raising scrapes, Nasrudin became a legendary folk hero, a "jester" whose irreverent attitude to life is a form of wisdom.

■ *The story on this page appears in an anthology entitled* Compagnons du Soleil *("Companions of the Sun") co-published (in French) by* UNESCO, *Editions de la Découverte (Paris) and the Fondation pour le progrès de l'Homme. The anthology has been prepared under the general editorship of the African historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo, in collaboration with Marie-Josèphe Beaud.*

One day, Nasrudin Hodja had bought a piece of liver and was taking it back home.

On the way, he met a friend who said to him:

"Let me write you down a wonderful recipe for cooking liver and you'll find what a mouth-watering meal it will make for you!"

Without more ado, he took out a piece of paper from his pocket and wrote out the most marvellous recipe.

Hodja was delighted at his stroke of good fortune and went cheerfully on his way, already licking his lips at the thought of eating such a delicious stew.

Suddenly, a great hawk swooped down out of the sky and snatched the piece of liver out of his hand with its powerful claws.

Completely taken aback at being robbed of his tasty morsel, Nasrudin Hodja held out his right hand and brandished the piece of paper at the thieving bird as it sped away and, barely concealing his disappointment, cried out:

"Don't count your blessings too soon. You can't make a meal of that liver because I've got the recipe. Here it is!"

A DIFFICULT TRANSITION

by Wladyslaw Adamski

THE spectacular breakdown of state socialism in eastern Europe has, for the first time since the end of the Second World War, given the people of the region an opportunity to freely choose their way of life and build anew their social, economic and political institutions. It should not, however, be taken for granted that this new opportunity will automatically result in a truly democratic and pluralistic social order.

When Poland and Hungary regained their sovereignty, the first nations of the region to do so, the new governments proclaimed their dedication to the free-market economy and political democracy. The other countries soon followed this pattern. But this was merely the first step; there is still a long way to go. It is certain that further progress will be difficult, since the newly constituted governments will have to implement their democratic creed in extremely unfavourable circumstances. The new authorities, which have inherited ruined economies and need to impose harsh austerity policies, will inevitably have to cope with recurring waves of populist discontent, thereby risking the loss of their positions in free elections.

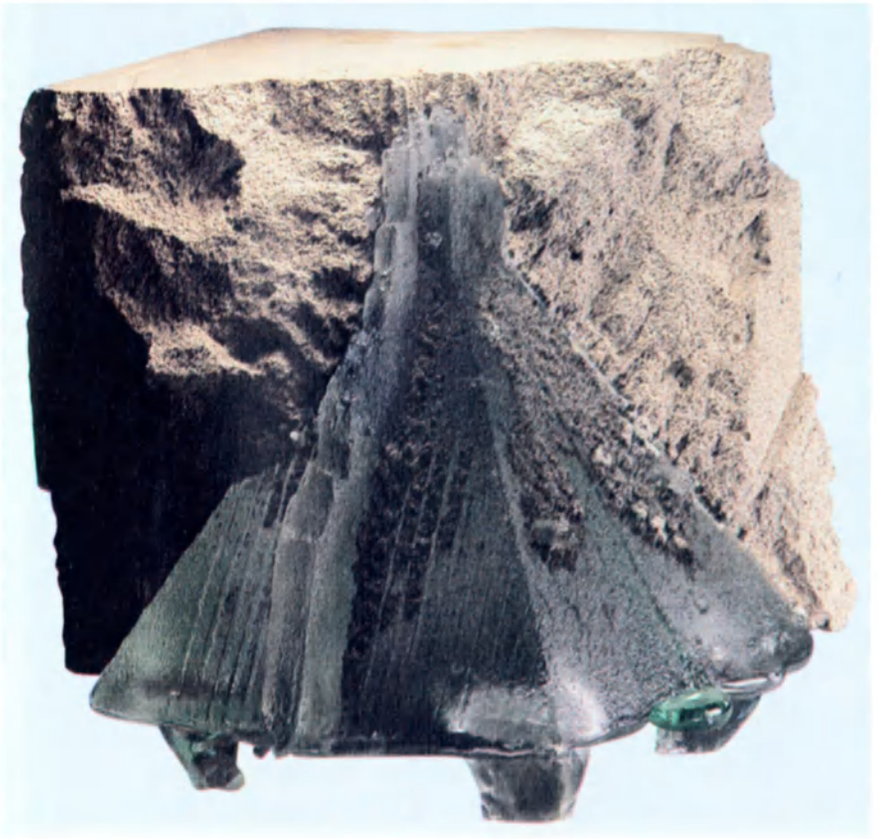
In the long run, however, the most crucial task is that of restructuring basic economic and social institutions. This means that new owners must be found for state enterprises and that the institutions of civil society, hitherto virtually non-existent, will have to be created from scratch. And all these goals must be achieved quickly, in societies almost totally deprived of a modern business and middle class, not to mention competent managers, political leaders and organizers of civic institutions independent of the state.

The question of which sections of society will support or oppose the reforms is crucial. In Poland, the Solidarity movement was nurtured by the sense of deprivation and anger felt by state employees when they compared their own situation with that of those they regarded as being unjustly privileged—the representatives of power. This feeling was reinforced by the obvious discrepancies between the actual situation and the ideological principle of the system, which maintained that rewards should be distributed according to "work and social usefulness".

The alliance of the Polish working class and the proletarianized intelligentsia, embodied in the Solidarity movement, was strong enough to paralyse the Party's ability to exercise its monopoly on power. At the same time, the strength of the alliance was limited. It expressed itself mainly in negative ways such as by boycotting the government's decisions and forcing it to make concessions.

What lessons can be drawn from this? What are the possibilities of transforming the social behaviour that helped to demolish state socialism into positive action in a context of democratic institutions?

The best way to approach this question is to look at privatization strategies. How much privatization do we really need and at what speed should it be implemented? Most important of all, what role in this process should be played by those who contributed to the breakdown of totalitarianism?



***New Age Pyramid* (1989), a work by the Czechoslovak sculptor Pavel Homolka. (Cast glass and foamed silicate mould.)**

WLADYSLAW ADAMSKI, Polish sociologist, is a member of his country's Academy of Sciences and Director of the philosophical and sociological journal *Sisyphus*.

It seems to me that any attempt to solve these problems requires linking them to their structural background. Prospects for the development of civil society and political democracy in Poland depend on how well we understand the type of social conflict that emerged between Solidarity and the former Party-State apparatus. This conflict, seen at the time as a clear-cut dichotomy between "us" and "them", still affects the post-communist governments.

A REVOLUTION FROM BELOW

The main reason for this seems to be the failure of new governments to absorb discontented workers into the process of reform. There is growing support from the public and from skilled workers for free-market and efficiency-oriented policies. Most state employees, on the other hand, still express an attachment to "social justice" or egalitarian principles.

These tendencies show how far the standards and values of the old system have been eroded. And paradoxically, those most responsible for its collapse have been the very people whose social advancement it favoured. Thus, from its beginnings in the 1940s, the system contained within it the seeds of its own downfall.

Workers and intellectuals began to behave unpredictably as the system of pay and perquisites began to break down. As the old order collapsed, the economy began spontaneously to adjust to the requirements of the market. The Polish Round Table negotiations of February-April 1989, and especially Solidarity's victory in the election of June 1989, might have been expected to carry this process further. However, it soon became clear that in the transition period governments were encountering apathy and even resistance. The hostility was more pronounced among state employees than among the former *nomenklatura.*

The new situation raises fresh problems. In creating a democratic system in Poland, what role should be played respectively by spontaneous movements and by political action undertaken by those in power? Should we expect the revolution to take place from below or from above? Basing my analysis on the Polish experience, I would suggest that the most likely way of achieving a change in the system is neither from above nor from below alone, but through a mixture of the two.

A real revolution from below took place in Poland. What has happened to it since Solidarity's victory? Has the spontaneous movement exhausted its potential? Should the working-class rebels now be disregarded and ignored? I do not think so, even if the alliance between workers and intellectuals has weakened considerably since many of Solidarity's leaders entered the state political institutions. The workers, who carried out the revolution, should not be ignored as a force for democratic change. The problem is finding a way of transforming their experience in a protest movement into constructive participation in the process of social reconstruction. If no solution is found, these powerful social forces will either openly oppose or, at the very least, boycott the rebuilding of Polish society. ❑

Negotiation of the Gdansk agreements between representatives of the Polish government and, at right, Lech Walesa, the strike leader at the Lenin shipyard (31 August 1980).

AN ELUSIVE IDEAL

by Romila Thapar

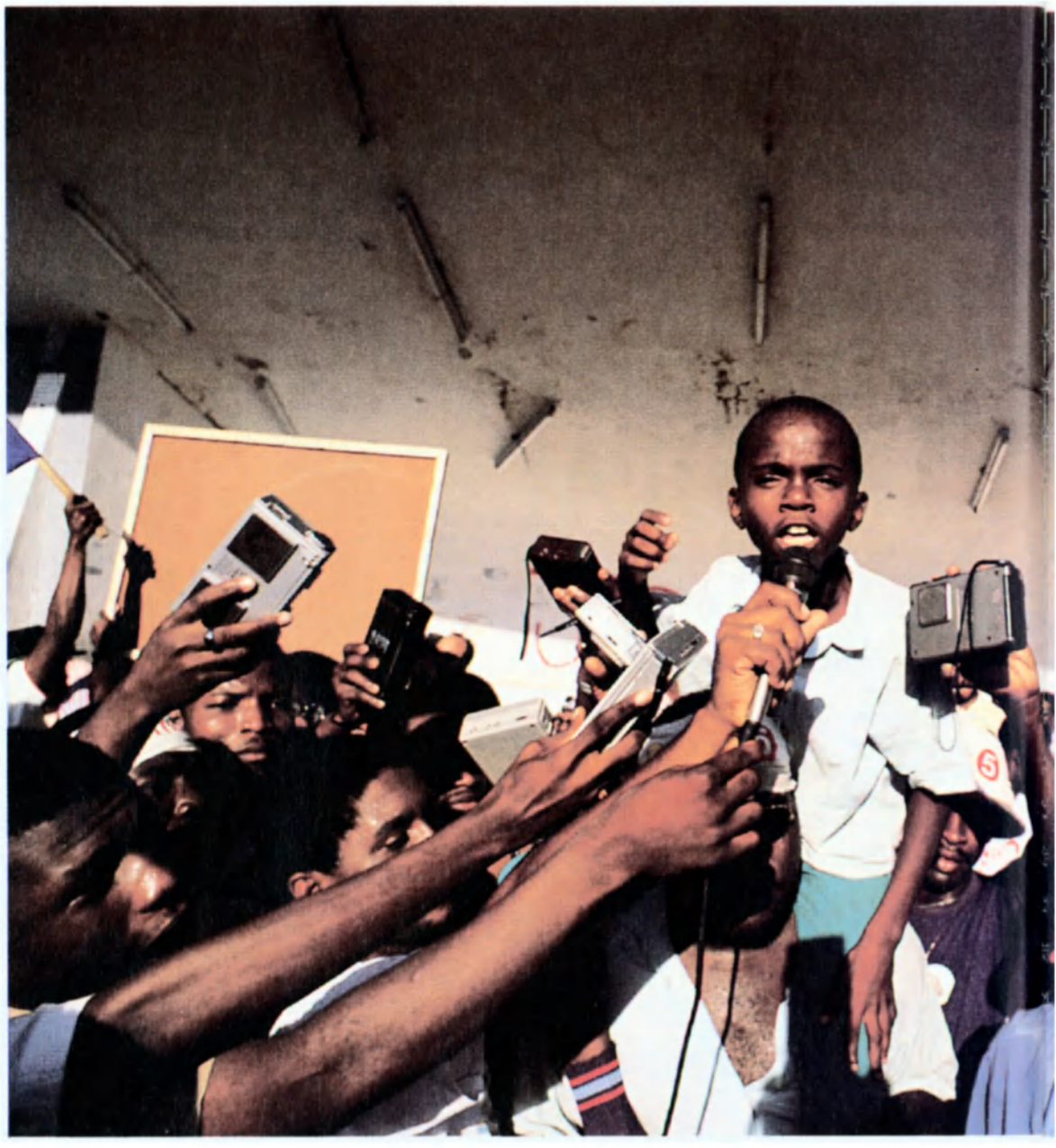
Right, *Marks of Hope*, a polychrome wood engraving by the Korean woman artist Ja Rhee Seund.

THE democratic ideal has never been fully translated into practice. Many so-called democratic societies in the past were hijacked and became oligarchies in which democratic rhetoric was used to preserve the fiction that the ruling group represented the majority. The Greek city states, for example, are often cited as the first democracies, but it is conveniently forgotten that in them slaves often outnumbered free citizens and were neither represented nor had any rights. In the light of historical experience, how can democracy be adapted to the circumstances of the late twentieth century?

In modern times democracy has often been associated with the nation-state. But perhaps we should not overlook the experience of the smaller social and political units which in the past have been run on quasi-democratic lines.

Those who sought to endow the nation-state with an identity by associating it with the middle class or with a regional, linguistic, ethnic or even religious group, claimed to be doing so in the name of democracy. Sometimes, it has been argued, these communities were fictitious and their ostensible identity camouflaged hidden aspirations. By equating the group's identity with nationalism, national and democratic causes coalesced. But in these nation-states the functioning of democracy was limited by the nationalism with which they were linked. Now that the nation-state is increasingly being questioned, should we also question democracy—or certain kinds of democracy?

One question that might be asked is whether democracy presupposes secularism. In many parts of the world, religion is now being politically manipulated on an unprecedented scale. In saying this I am not objecting to people's right to practice their faith, but to the way in which various politicians and fundamentalists



have distorted this right. If questioning the public function of religion necessarily leads to secularism, then this could encourage the promotion of another approach to democracy, particularly in societies where several religions exist side by side.

Democracy implies both representation and decisions based on the views of the majority. But what constitutes a majority? If it is simply a matter of the number of votes cast at elections, this opens the way to vote-rigging or to the mobilization of mass support by ideologies that appear to espouse a variety of causes but in reality are no more than a mechanism for attracting and controlling large numbers of people. I am thinking here of the kind of reactionary populism based on race or religion that has time and again caused tensions and violence in many parts of the world, both North and South. In the interests of true democracy, it would be worth considering how such movements can be prevented from imposing their definition of majority rule, especially when religious communities are exploited politically as part of a supra-national hidden agenda.

The modern nation-state also faces the problem of accommodating minority cultures, which are increasingly aware that they cannot be excluded from the democratic majority. This problem is likely to become especially acute in the industrialized countries, where sharply differing groups have been forcibly brought together through past colonial connections and present economic needs, and where a numerical majority is sometimes reduced to the status of a political minority. In ex-colonies where such conflicts are also known, the divergent groups do at least normally share some common inheritance and history.

The best way to understand the correlation

A budding orator in Haiti.

between culture and democracy is to examine the manner in which individuals or groups choose their identity and perceive the differences between themselves and others. In part this is the result of early socialization. It can also spring from tension and conflicts, which sharpen people's perception of their identity. Why, incidentally, should the nation-state insist on a single identity? After all, individuals have multiple identities. The sterility of a single identity could be replaced by a multi-faceted one involving more complex social and cultural patterns. A multi-faceted democracy would also be more difficult to control politically.

Representational democracy often ends up with power far removed from the individual citizen. Now that cinema, television and advertising have all got into the act, would-be representatives of the people find themselves addressing audiences they cannot even see. True representativity must be based on some reference back to the electors, who must also retain the right to recall their representatives, if they so wish. These seemingly negative rights can provide an essential corrective to the tendency of representatives to turn into power-brokers.

Beware of the watchdog

The collapse of some socialist economies has led the peoples in the countries concerned to a desperate hope that the free market will protect them against the revival of totalitarian regimes. But the experience of other countries shows that the market cannot do this. Unfortunately, the market can equally well lend itself to other kinds of dictatorial demand—from consumerism, the armaments industry, multinational corporations and other interests. Such demands, which undermine equality of opportunity and social justice, can only be countered by an equitable economic system and a legal system that is accessible to all citizens and prevents the erosion of human rights and the annulling of human dignity.

However, any system can be thwarted, abused or rendered ineffective if those who control it cannot be challenged. Institutions which are expected to act as watchdogs often end up by becoming a party to the abuses they are supposed to prevent. The articulation of dissent and protest is imperative for democratic systems. Even in democratic societies, when children are taught their rights and duties attention is rarely drawn to their right to disagree. Conformity is at a premium, and dissent is frowned upon or ignored. The submissive subject rather than the autonomous individual is regarded as the ideal citizen.

In pleading the case of the autonomous individual, I am not advocating an anarchic society. Autonomous individuals do not set out to destroy society; they are concerned with changing it in creative ways. They do not necessarily form part of the power structure themselves, but they comment on it and if needs be protest against specific actions taken by those in power. As long as it is accepted that there is room for moral authority as well as political and social authority in the running of society, such people will always have a place in the democratic process. ❑

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RELIGION, SECULARISM AND DEMOCRACY

by Ehsan Naraghi

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BEFORE the revolution of 1906, Iran's public secular schools were the symbol and crucible of democratic thought. The aim of the revolutionaries at that time was to increase the number of these schools, for they knew that democracy could not take root in Iranian soil without them. But an entrenched landowning system resisted the expansion of secular schooling in the rural areas where most Iranians lived. Economically, politically, and administratively, Iran's rural majority remained under the thumb of major land holders. With positions in parliament and power in the countryside, even after the revolution, this class successfully opposed the spread of modern education on its turf.

In 1911, there were 125 public secular schools in Teheran, with some 10,500 students. There were about the same number of pupils in secular education in the provinces. This represented a mere two per cent of school-age children. The secular school system advocated by the new regime therefore did not develop. When Reza Shah Pahlavi (1878-1944) came to power in 1925, he introduced his authoritarian regime without great difficulty. While he allowed secular schooling to develop to some extent during his reign, the schools were purged of democratic leavening and became institutions whose main purpose was to train state functionaries.

The same approach prevailed under his son, Mohammad Reza Shah (1919-1980). The main idea was to provide young people with degrees, not to educate them as citizens. As a result, while secular education had more than eight million students enrolled on the eve of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, it provided no bulwark against the growing influence of religion.

The growth of secular schooling opened up

Religious and secular education at Isfahan. Left, students arrive at a government school (1958). Above, a teacher and his pupils at a Qur'anic school.

a socio-cultural abyss. Economic development, the Shah's hobby horse, took no account of cultural values or social relations. A form of secularism that was hostile to participation in political life and to culture was bound to pave the way for an Islamic revolution, which would declare itself able to fill the void by a return to values anchored in Iranian society.

Under Reza Shah, traditional schools of religious instruction, the *madrasas*, had shrunk in number, but around ten thousand students were enrolled in them. They offered the only training for the clergy in Iran. All religious ceremonies and practices came under the jurisdiction of the *marjataqlid*, or guides, who were taught in the traditional teaching establishments. They continued to exert an undoubted influence, albeit reduced, throughout the reign of the Pahlavis—from 1925 until 1979.

The rupture

Religious and secular currents coexisted in the school system for years. It was only in 1963, with the expulsion of the ayatollah Khomeyni (c.1900-1989) and his exile in Iraq, that the confrontation between the regime and the mullahs became overt. The police intervened brutally in the school where Khomeyni taught and arrested him.

Mohammad Reza Shah's regime prided itself on its economic and social achievements; in its eyes, the old days were finished and their legacy was negligible. Meanwhile, the religious bodies, under pressure from the *bazaris*, or traditional merchants, were developing an "anti-modernist" mentality that was notably hostile to the regime. The *bazaris* did not fit well into Iran's new economy, where a certain form of private industrialization was favoured by state protectionism. In particular, the export of traditional Iranian staple products was slipping out of their hands.

Pointing to the faults in this monopolistic type of development, which favoured a thin slice of society, clergy and *bazaris* began systematically to criticize the regime's accomplishments. The *bazaris* subsidized the works of the mullahs (doctors of Qur'anic law), who were duly grateful and gave them moral support. This phenomenon took a special hold in the cities, where many mosques were built.

Meanwhile, the state had no strategy for assimilating the populations who, partly because of demographic pressure, were flocking from the countryside into the cities. Few of these newcomers could identify with a modernity increasingly based on foreign models and symbols from which they felt alienated. Thrown back onto traditional structures and patterns of behaviour, they were easily influenced by the mullahs, who exploited the laxity of the media in order to win over this population marginalized by technological progress and an inegalitarian regime.

In its direct confrontation with the regime, the Shiite clergy devised new methods and encouraged the acquisition of new skills. A 1965 study on structures and teaching methods in the religious schools of Qom, Mashad and Teheran showed how students wanted to learn foreign languages—above all English—but refused to watch television or listen to the radio, because they were the Voice of Power.

For the most part, these students came from the lower classes for whom education was a means of improving their social status.

In the absence of political parties, trade unions or associations, which were banned by the regime, the only possible setting tolerated for communal activities was that of religion, where uprooted country people found a familiar world whose language, symbols and structure they understood. Moreover, the Shiite clergy, adept at the dramatic use of rhetoric, knew how to exploit the taste of illiterate Iranians for the spoken word. They used cassette recordings with great skill.

Without directly attacking the Shah or the regime, the mullahs managed to completely debunk the lifestyle of the West by denying it any legitimacy. The denunciation of certain forms of behaviour as "satanic" (meetings between the sexes, sports clubs, culture centres, beaches, television and alcohol), went straight to the hearts of conservative townspeople and of the newly urbanized class that did not know where it stood in relation to modern "Western" life. The latter became a growing source of anxiety, upsetting the moral values which people from a traditional background hoped to instil in their children, especially their daughters.

Unaware that this was happening, the Shah talked on about the "great civilization" he intended to build, while Islamic militants capitalized on the malaise aroused by a lifestyle that most of the population did not adopt. Under the Pahlavis, people increasingly identified with religion as the main defender of culture and the Iranian community.

THE LESSONS OF A DUAL EXPERIENCE

If in Iran, as in other parts of the world, religion is engaged in a struggle against secular society, it is partly because secularism has claimed the right to assume the power that once belonged to religion. The defence of certain interests and moral traditions is—as these closing years of the century go to show—the last, and still very solid, bastion defended by these religious forces. When the instruments of emancipation become automatic or dogmatic, and hence instruments of oppression, when principles of social and moral justice are systematically violated, religion, with its guiding spiritual and moral principles, aspires to return to the centre of the stage.

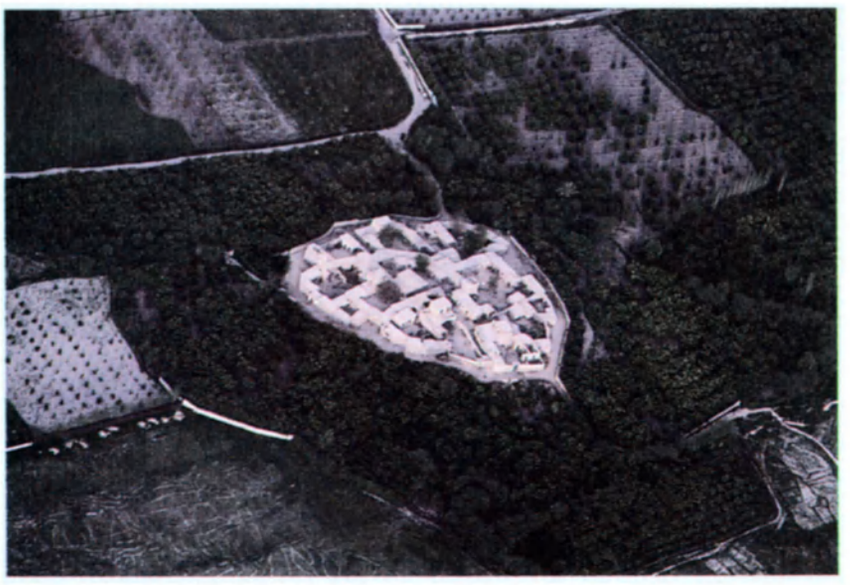
In refusing to separate politics and faith, clergy and state, transcendance and community, Islam presents itself as a way to combat the disintegration of the social fabric in contemporary societies. However, secularism in Iran did not have its necessary concomitant in the form of the exercise of democracy by all citizens, the refusal of exclusion, the reduction of privileges and social injustice, and respect for freedom of thought. The vast majority of the population was prey to a process of marginalization on every front: social, economic, cultural and political. Secularism in Iran led to a spiritual backlash.

As for Islam, which has today stepped into the gap, its attitude is still defensive rather than receptive, in spite of its claims to solve all problems. There is a risk that it will exclude the population from the modern world at a time when new chapters are opening in history, economics, science, education and culture.

Secularists and Shiites should be fighting the same battle, according to their own principles: the battle for knowledge, which knows no exclusion. Iran is the only country in the East to have experienced two such extremes of social organization, each in reaction to the other. Certainly, Iranian men and women today have been "enriched" in the sense that they have known both experiences and their two underlying conceptions: on the one hand earthly man, with his responsibilities as citizen, and on the other, spiritual man with his transcendent aspirations.

Can the lessons drawn from these two conceptions experienced in daily life reconcile the demands of the spirit and the need for material progress? Or will they unleash a new despair? The revolutionary ferment of ideas and events seems to be dying down. Tradition and revolution are not reason. They are visions of man and society which leave traces. Perhaps coming generations, educated in the ways of history, will take a road that leads to spiritual riches, as well to a better organized society. May they lose nothing of what has been gained from either side, and be protected from the darker aspects of each of them. ❑

***Exile* (1986), oil on canvas by Françoise Leroy-Garloud, a French artist of Asian origin. The painting is at once a salute to a people scarred by war, a tribute to the constructive role of women in crisis situations, and a message of hope.**



A village surrounded by gardens near Shiraz.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN POST-INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

by Eleanora Masini Barbieri

ACCORDING to the American sociologist Elise Boulding, there are three areas in which the work of women has built what she calls a "civic society" based on mutual respect. The first is related to children and teaching. In almost all societies, women are responsible for the education of children up to their seventh year. Psychologists agree that these are the years in which the child's world-vision is formed.

The second is related to women's hidden economic role. Its arena may be the kitchen or the garden, the small production unit which played a crucial role in agricultural societies and has also often been, though less visibly, the salvation of the highly-industrialized societies of our time.

The third area has also been largely unnoticed. Women are and have been what Elise Boulding calls the "cement of society". They have fulfilled this role in private, in family life, and even in dynastic alliances between villages or towns over the centuries.

Boulding has described these areas, which belong to the "underside of history", as "society's green-space, its visioning space, its bonding space. It is a space where minds can learn to grapple with complexities that are destroying the overside."

Women's efforts to build a viable society of respect and understanding also contribute to the creation of a democratic culture. Children learn respect, tolerance, and other principles of democratic behaviour at a very early stage, in their relations with other members of the family and the community. In this context, it is interesting to observe and compare the attitudes of families in different parts of the world: the strong community sense of the hierarchically organized extended family in Africa, the profound respect with which the elder members of the Chinese family are regarded, and the focus on younger family members in modern

Western society. Women play a central role in the shaping of these attitudes through the way they behave and the example they set. It is because their public role has been invisible that they have learned respect for others—a respect that encourages democratic behaviour rather than the dominating behaviour often expected of men. Respect does not, however, mean accepting domination by others; it is coupled with the demand that women be respected in their turn.

Many examples could be cited of women's civic spirit. Polish women contributed to the rebuilding of Warsaw's schools after the Second World War; Japanese women organized support systems after Hiroshima, as did the women of Mexico after the 1984 earthquake.

The concept of the democratic society developed in the industrial era. Today, industrial society appears to have reached its limits. The natural environment has been exploited, especially by the rich countries, in a way that certainly cannot be called democratic. Nor have people found happiness in material wealth, as is clearly evident among the young people of the wealthier countries of North America and Europe. We have reached both external and internal limits, to use a phrase coined by Aurelio Peccei, the founder of the Club of Rome. Our inner selves require answers that are far more profound than those industrial society has provided. In post-industrial society, whatever form it takes, a new mentality will be essential. We must use the many capacities of people, and especially the specific capacities of women, that are now untapped.

Women citizens of tomorrow

Post-industrial society will be a complex, uncertain society, in which such tools and methods of industrial society as specialization, separation of tasks, hierarchical structures, and mass production will no longer be relevant. Notable among its features will be decentralized networks of small units, diversified activities peformed by the same person or unit, and rapidity of action.

The society of the future will require people to be flexible. They will have to perform several tasks at the same time. They will need to possess a new sense of time. Production will be "personalized" rather than "standardized". As technology develops, people will have to learn new tasks and skills during their working lives, and in many cases to change jobs to keep pace with technological change.

In this society women are bound to play an

increasingly important role, if only because in almost every country they have a higher life expectancy than men and head one-third of the world's households. The future of many major technological innovations, especially in biotechnology, will depend on whether women accept or reject them.

Women possess many of the capacities that will be needed in post-industrial society. Research in various countries has shown that they are particularly flexible and adaptable. Since their life-cycle forces them to stop and start work, often changing jobs, they are used to change. They have to be versatile. In addition to cooking, looking after the children, ironing and doing other household tasks, they may also have a job to do at home—sewing, perhaps, in developing countries, computer work in the industrialized world.

Women also tend to have a temporal rhythm which is closer to real time than to what Lewis Mumford called "clock time". This capacity too will be increasingly important in an overcrowded, unsynchronized society. Women find it difficult to standardize their

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Men and women, citizens and constructors of a democratic culture.

production. In the society of the future, non-standardized production will become increasingly sought-after.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

In social life too, women seem to have capacities which will be important for the future—the capacity to create solidarity, to establish priorities, and to reject hierarchies.

Traditionally women have sought group solidarity. They exchange information about their children, their old people, matters of health and so on, as they collect water from the village well and as they meet in the supermarket. Whatever changes technology may bring, women will be unlikely to give up this exchange with each other. At moments of great distress—in time of war, revolution, natural catastrophe, during refugee movements—this capacity has been vital. The capacity of women to create solidarities and to understand and live with people from different cultures and backgrounds can make an enormous contribution to the building of a democratic culture.

Women have a strong sense of priorities. In times of need or stress, they make choices relating to their children and their future well-being, rather than to short-term benefits. In China, Canada, and in other countries with a large migrant population, research has shown that mothers faced with a range of choices put their children's education first. In developing countries, women's first priority might be water or food for their children rather than other economic benefits. There is also evidence that women are less inclined to accept hierarchical structures than men. This is important if, as the American futurologist Alvin Toffler believes, we are moving towards an increasingly egalitarian society.

Solidarity, the capacity to put first things first, and the rejection of hierarchies are traits that, if fostered rather than suppressed, may lead to a more democratic society, one that emerges from the behaviour of its citizens rather than from structures and laws.

If one accepts that the building of a democratic society depends more on citizens than on laws, institutions and structures, then women will have an essential contribution to make. And full use has not yet been made of their capacities.

We should be seeking to create democratic citizens, with the school working hand in hand with the family to foster democratic education.

Versatility and flexibility are two qualities which women are often compelled to develop by force of circumstance.

Although much has been accomplished already, much still remains to be done. The education system has undoubtedly changed for the better since the late 1960s, but in some countries there is plenty of room for improvement.

A democratic culture emerges from the sharing of values, however differently expressed, and from behaviour related to shared values. Only thus can a culture be built. There can be no democratic society without democratic citizens to construct it. Citizens rather than ideas, structures or institutions must be the starting-point. ❑

THE ARTIST AS INSECT

by André Brink

In this age of violence and strife, terrorism and famine, multinational corporations and global power alliances, we have understandably abandoned Shelley's romantic faith in poets as the unacknowledged legislators of the world. Yet there is reason to believe that without the poet, the intellectual, the artist, the creator, life might be even worse.

If it is always prudent to remind ourselves that no single society in the world dares call itself totally free or totally democratic, I am mainly concerned here with those societies which, having emerged only recently from various forms of absolutism and political oppression, are now groping towards definitions of democracy and freedom of which, as in Czechoslovakia or Germany, they have been deprived for a long time or which, as in the case of South Africa, they have never known.

The territory of the intellectual and the creator is culture: it is that territory in which the private and the public interact in order to transform the raw matter of experience into meaning. No wonder that, in a state of oppression, culture should function in particularly intense ways. For decades, *samizdat* in Central Europe has provided a vibrant and electrically charged cultural experience. In Chile, when no other forms of protest were allowed by the Pinochet regime, illiterate washerwomen began to record, in embroidery and weaving and appliqué, the passionate experiences of an entire generation otherwise doomed to oblivion. In a South Africa dehumanized by apartheid, when successive States of Emergency virtually smothered overt resistance, when children were killed and women maimed and men blown up by parcel bombs, a veritable explosion in the arts—in dance and music, in photography and painting and sculpture, in poetry and the theatre—ensured that the oppressed black masses were activated in solidarity and awareness, and that even the conscience of a white ruling minority was ceaselessly assailed and provoked into a discovery of what was really happening behind the façades of official lies, distortions and half-truths. Even on the basic level of disseminating information, artists were performing an invaluable function.

Now comes a transitional stage fraught with difficulties and danger. Much of this derives from a clash between different notions of "culture". And it seems to me that in our attempts to formulate the role of culture in the precarious movement towards freedom and the function of the intellectual creator within that process, much of our effort should be directed towards a redefinition of culture and of the aesthetic which forms an integral part of it.

On the one hand there is the Great Tradition of the West, of a Capital-C-Culture for the privileged few. And how can one reject a tradition which has bequeathed to us Sophocles, Dante, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Mozart, Tolstoy, Proust, Kafka and Picasso? At the same time this tradition becomes problematic if it is seen, as it so often is, as exclusivist, deriving from a Greek model state which could afford the luxury of distinguishing between manual labour and mental exertion only because the presence of enough slaves made it possible for full citizens to devote their time to "higher pursuits"?

In this respect a culture of struggle against oppression brought a valuable corrective, since it activated, not individual artists only, but the masses, the whole of an oppressed people. This

***Year 3000* (1987), by the British photographer Michael Freeman.**

grassroots culture has opened, for all societies closed until very recently, new vistas of invaluable opportunities. Yet this culture, too, can be demonstrated to harbour seeds of destruction: directed, through the exigencies of oppression, only towards a struggle for political liberation, the field of focus of such a culture threatens to become extremely narrow and immediate. What is not expedient, what cannot be sloganized or digested immediately, what does not offer itself as a praxis, as "a weapon for liberation", is all too easily discounted or discarded. The problem of this vision of culture, and of the role of the intellectual/creator in it, does not lie in the fact that it summons culture to fulfil a political function, but that it conceives of culture only in function of its political usefulness.

A well-known anecdote told by the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca illuminates the problem. A rich farmer and a peasant are walking along a river bank on a particularly beautiful morning. Moved by the scenery, the rich man stops to exclaim, "Isn't it beautiful? Look at those trees . . . the clouds . . . the reflections!" But the peasant can only clutch his stomach,

groaning, "I am hungry, I am hungry, I am hungry!" This has often been interpreted to suggest that aesthetics are obscene; that our needs are first of all material. But such an interpretation is an insult to our humanity. The poor and the oppressed do indeed require food, and shelter, and comfort. But to suggest that beauty or excellence are attainable only *at the expense of* what are alleged to be more "basic" needs is a denial of what makes us human. The needs of the mind are as essential as those of the body. It is not enough that we live; we also need to ask questions about living: we need to pursue, incessantly, the endless possibilities of meaning in life. And this defines culture as a key dimension of any society's movement towards a fuller experience of freedom and democracy.

But what role is to be assigned to the individual intellectual or artist in this process?

Our secular world has no room any more for Carlyle's "poet as hero", for the lone thinker or creator as *vates*, as prophet or priest or visionary. In the clamour of a people the *vox clamantis* is all too often drowned, or ignored. It is so easy to fade into irrelevance. In an endangered society, threatened by authoritarian rule, the single dissident voice that dares cry out may acquire an inordinate resonance. It can become a rallying point for the oppressed masses. But once the masses have begun to shake off their most visible shackles, once a people as a whole has broken down its walls and fences, has thrown open its prisons and its Gulags and its Robben Islands, what role is left for the individual artist? Is his or her function not superseded by the collective needs of the people?

***Demolition*, a trompe l'œil mural in La Plata, a town in Buenos Aires province (Argentina).**

If the individual persists as a function of an obsolete elitist tradition, then indeed there can be little, if any, justification for him. (And I say "him" advisedly, as this kind of function is essentially male and chauvinist by nature.) The individual as "free agent" is a figment of the mind, a person without history, ultimately a person without conscience, who denies or ignores his utter involvement in the whole rich fabric of the world. Yet the opposite notion, that of the "commissar", Stalin's "cultural worker", is also suspect: he (again it is essentially a male function) acts primarily as an agent of power and of bureaucracy.

For this reason the culturally significant individual should be redefined as a creative and intellectual being with social, historical and moral responsibilities. Such a person can fulfil an indispensable function within the processes that propel a society towards democracy.

This function, as I see it, is that of a composite insect.

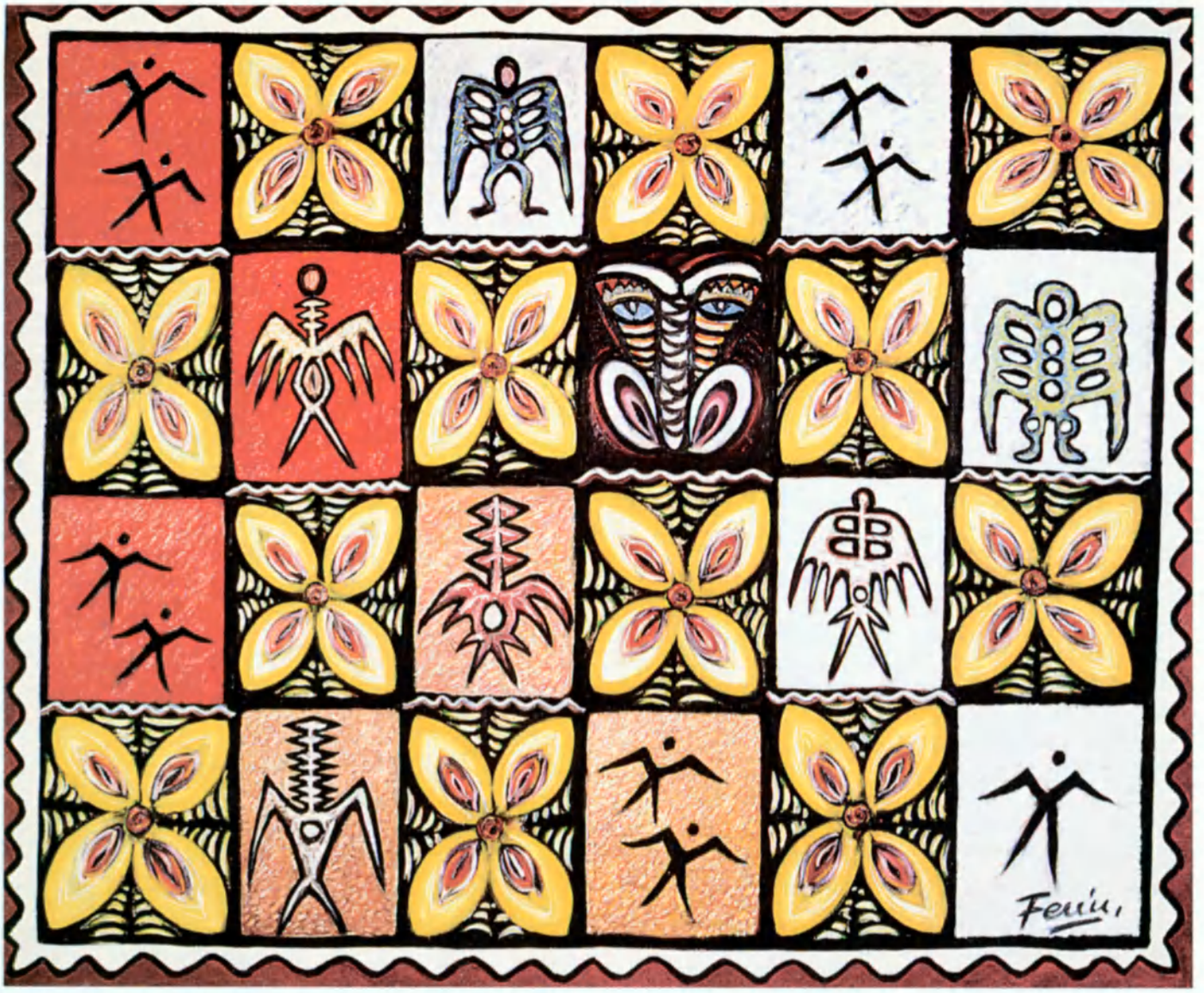
First, it is the function of Gregor Samsa who, one morning, woke up to find himself "transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect". Terrifying his family and acquaintances into a rediscovery of themselves, a redefinition of their own individual and collective roles, he is rejected and "misread" by all. In the end he is starved to death; he becomes forever "the thing next door". He becomes society's Other; he forces society to acknowledge its own alterity. Even if it tries to deny him, it will never be the same again. At the end of the story his sister "sprang to her feet first and stretched her young body": femininity and youth affirm themselves through her; the possibility of rebirth and renewal is admitted to the once stale world of habit and convention.

A second insect to bear in mind is the bee in the French novelist Jean Paulhan's essay "L'abeille". If you catch a bee in your hand, says Paulhan, it will sting you before you crush it to death. This may not amount to much; yet had it not been so, there would not have been any bees left in the world.

My third insect is very humble indeed. It is the gadfly of Socrates, described by the critic Tzvetan Todorov in his recent essay "Les taons modernes". Superficially the gadfly is nothing but a nuisance, leaving nothing and no-one in peace or at ease, but in the final analysis it is a restless questioning spirit which acts to "reveal and possibly to modify the complex of values which serves as guiding principle to the life of a cultural group".

A fourth insect which serves as model to the intellectual/creator is the cricket in Miroslav Krleza's "The Cricket below the Waterfall". This is how the main character in the story describes it:

"I discovered a cricket in the men's room, my dear fellow; down there in the men's room I discovered a cricket. Underneath the waterfall that splashes over the putrid black-tarred wall, where the citron slices float and the smell of ammonia bites our nostrils as in some laboratory, right down there at the very dregs of the human stench, one night I heard the voice of



***Spiritual presence*, by the Samoan artist Feu'u.**

the cricket. There wasn't even a dog in the pub, the wind roared like a wild beast, and in the stench of the men's room was a voice of the ripe summer, the redolence of August, the breath of meadows surging like green velvet: the voice of the cricket out of the urine and faeces, the voice of nature that transforms even stinking city toilets into starry sunsets, when the mills are softly humming in the russet horizon, and the first crickets announce themselves as the harbingers of an early autumn. Here, you see, I've brought him some breadcrumbs. Come, let's pay him a visit."

In order to keep alive this faith in something beautiful, something meaningful, in a sordid world; in order constantly to shock the world out of complacency; in order to prod the human mind into that kind of awareness which never takes yes for an answer, the first allegiance of the creator-intellectual-artist is to his or her conscience, not to a party or a group, not even to a cause, not even to "the people". But—and this is the crux of the matter—unless that conscience is forged in action and in communion with others, with "the people", and unless the most private of its discoveries is informed by the acknowledgement of a total involvement in the history—the past, the present, the future—of its society, it has no weight and no relevance.

Whether the individual creator wills it or not, whatever he or she does, or neglects to do, in a society still groping towards democracy, is allied to one of the two great social dimensions involved in the process: that of the erstwhile power establishment, the haves, the oppressors; or that of the erstwhile victims, the have-nots, the oppressed. The moral choice is obvious. Yet there is no point in simply promoting or advancing a cause, however worthy it may be in itself. And before we can accede to a fuller awareness of the truly democratic, we need to be liberated as much from the mentality of "victim" as from that of "oppressor". This is why our composite insect acquires such vital importance.

He or she cannot be circumscribed by, or forced into subservience to, any cause or ideology or programme: yet in his or her freedom lies the assumption of his or her full responsibility as a human being, in the midst of that difficult, dangerous and exhilarating process through which a people numbed by oppression moves tentatively but inexorably towards more democracy and greater freedom. ❑

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NEWSBRIEFS

SPOTLIGHT ON THE AMERINDIANS

The Amerindians provided the theme for a number of recent events organized by UNESCO or with UNESCO support on the occasion of the Fifth Centenary of the Encounter between Two Worlds (1492-1992). A week-long Amerindian Film Festival held at UNESCO's Paris headquarters featured some fifteen films illustrating the diversity and resilience of Amerindian cultures and offering an opportunity for reflection about the future prospects of the Amerindian peoples. In October, ten elders of North American Indian tribes attended a ceremony held to inaugurate the *"Vaisseau d'Archipel"*, a 40-metre high, 10-metre wide symbolic statue in the French town of Montbéliard. During the ceremony, the elders delivered a message for the third millennium. Meanwhile, a book has been published on the first contacts between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the New World in Mexico, North America and the Far North, three regions that have hitherto been studied separately. The book, a collective work entitled *Destins Croisés*, was produced in connection with the UNESCO-supported PREGANEM study programme on different aspects of the Encounter between Europe and America.
Its joint publishers are Albin Michel (Paris), UNESCO and PREGANEM.

GROUPS IN GUINEA, CHINA AND INDIA HONOURED FOR LITERACY WORK

On 8 September, UNESCO marked the 27th International Literacy Day by awarding three international literacy prizes at Expo' 92, the Universal Exhibition at Seville (Spain). Guinea was awarded the International Reading Association Prize for outstanding functional literacy work performed in connection with its agricultural rehabilitation project in the Fouta Djallon region. The Noma prize, created by the late Japanese publisher Shoichi Noma, went to the Education Commission of Xinjiang Uigur Autonomous Region in China for its success in significantly reducing illiteracy, while the King Seejong Literacy Prize sponsored by the Republic of Korea was awarded to the Movement for Light of Knowledge, which has been instrumental in eradicating basic illiteracy in Pondicherry state, in India. According to statistics compiled by UNESCO, almost one thousand million people throughout the world still cannot read and write and more than 100 million children in the 6 to 11-year age-group have never attended school.

POCKET GUIDE TO YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

UNESCO has published a new edition of its *International Directory of Youth Bodies* containing information collected from 123 countries, 391 international organizations, 64 non-governmental organizations and 13 intergovernmental organizations. Key explanatory pages in this handy, pocket-format guide are in English, French and Spanish. Copies may be obtained free of charge from UNESCO's Youth and Sports Activities Division, 1 Rue Miollis, 75015 Paris, France.

YOUTH IN ACTION

Fourteen young people who are working to improve the quality of life in their communities were invited to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 7 to 17 September, in order to swap experiences about the activities in which they are engaged. Ranging in age from 18 to 27, they came from Belarus, Brazil, Colombia, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, New Zealand, Saint Lucia, Spain, Sri Lanka, the United States and Yemen. This international meeting, the second of its kind, was held as part of UNESCO's "Youth in Action" pilot programme, whose objective is to get young people involved in UNESCO's activities and to interest the media in young people's efforts to solve social problems.

EDUCATION FOR AIDS PREVENTION

Education has a vital role to play in the prevention of Aids, not only as a means of passing on information but as a way of changing attitudes towards the disease, the spread of which is assuming alarming proportions. In conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO) UNESCO is engaged in a joint programme of Aids education in schools, which will soon be extended to include the informal (or out-of-school) sector. UNESCO has set up at its Paris Headquarters a documentation centre for the collection, exchange and circulation of teaching materials for young people of school age. It contains more than 1,000 publications and 120 video films from all the world regions, which may be consulted at the centre. A list of these publications and films can be obtained by writing to Education for the prevention of Aids, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

THE EDUCATION FOR ALL VIDEOBANK

The Education for All Videobank set up by UNESCO to make known educational experiences from all over the world is now operational. Its first 22 videofilms cover a wide range of subjects, including the use of video for training parents and community workers caring for disabled children; pilot projects on support for schools in remote areas; and the needs of homeless and working children. A catalogue has been published and copies of the videofilms are available from UNESCO at a nominal fee. UNESCO invites schools, non-governmental organizations and individuals with educational audio-visual materials to send it a copy for possible inclusion in the Videobank. For further information, please write to the Unit for Inter-Agency Co-operation in Basic Education, UNESCO, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France. ❐

Commentary *by Federico Mayor*

This article is one of a series in which the Director-General of UNESCO sets out his thinking on matters of current concern

For a democratic culture

A viable democracy is inconceivable in the absence of an authentic democratic culture. This culture of democracy seems to me to be a space that permits the synthesis of four fundamental concepts: citizenship, tolerance, education, and the free exchange of ideas and people.

Citizenship? "The renewal of citizenship is not a by-product but on the contrary a precondition of democracy," Vaclav Havel has written. "Citizenship is courage, love of the truth, an ever-alert conscience, a freedom within us and a freely accepted responsibility for public life. We can never be certain that we can fully live up to these values."

This analysis sets the ethical dimension in the forefront of citizenship. This ethic, itself fed by values which we must one day dig deep into ourselves to rediscover, reflects both our common humanity and—notwithstanding all the diversity in concepts and in practice—the universal basis of democracy.

Tolerance? A democratic culture is based on the understanding and acceptance of other cultures. It expresses the will to coexist with others. How many authoritarian systems have lodged their power in the celebration of racial distinction and ethnic prejudice! Yet cultural identities are hardly homogeneous. The richest among them incorporates the seeds and fruits of the most widely separated cultures and the most disparate civilizations. If I were asked what it is today that creates "the wealth of nations", I would not refer to their technological power or their economic might. I would speak of the capacity of their citizens—whatever their origins, the colour of their skins, the land or the language of their ancestors—to join together in support of a certain number of ideals and principles which make it possible for them to live together.

Tolerance does not only mean patience toward others: it implies a knowledge of others but even more a respect for the beauty of their cultures. Tolerance is therefore as much an ethical as an aesthetic attitude.

Rather than dwelling on discrimination, I wish to emphasize the role of tolerance in promoting integration.

How, for example, can we reconcile the double imperative essential to all citizenship—of unity *and* freedom, of membership of the community *and* individual liberty? Can we, in societies that are increasingly diversified, continue to identify democracy with majority rule if the latter cannot guarantee the expression and adequate protection, as part of public life, of the demands and beliefs of all groups of citizens? Can we even conceive of democracy if we do not believe in the need to protect minority rights?

A truly democratic culture should deny no specific identity, be it ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural, any more than it should develop at the expense of national identity, collective solidarity and the shared hopes of all. Such a democratic culture offers everyone the opportunity of self-identification through pluralistic and freely assumed loyalties. Thus at the cultural level, democracy must be what it is at the political level: a fusing of personal will with the general interest.

Education? It is clear that a democratic culture, insofar as it defines people as being capable of making choices, cannot develop freely in the barren soil of ignorance, any more than it can flourish in a social setting that remains a mosaic of isolated groups, unable to communicate among themselves other than by prejudice and violence. Ignorance strengthens dictatorships and enfeebles democracy. Education lies at the very heart of democratic culture.

Finally, the free exchange of ideas and of people. The free exchange of people permits them to choose personal lifestyles and modes of expression, and gives them greater control over their individual and collective fate. Total freedom of information and expression is the cornerstone of democratic culture, insofar as such freedom alone can ensure the transparency that is indispensable to the exercise of choice and responsibility.

The choice and responsibility of which I speak are exercised not merely at the level of the community or nation, but at all levels, ranging from the immediate environment all the way to the ecosystem itself. True citizenship must be learned and put to the test in the neighbourhood, the family, the workplace, voluntary associations and, of course, in the daily exercise of public freedoms at village or municipal levels.

True citizenship is also put to the test globally, notably in our assumption of responsibility for the environment, its preservation or its irreversible degradation; and in the limits which—by the choices we make or fail to make now—we impose on the rights of future generations.

To learn to coexist with our environment; to learn to coexist with other cultures—these are, in my opinion, the major challenges confronting us as the twentieth century draws to a close. I am convinced that only an authentic culture of democracy—because it is a convivial culture—will allow us to meet these challenges with success. ❑

RECENT RECORDS

MUSIC FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Chocolate. *Cante Flamenco*
CD Ocora HM 83
▶ Born in Jerez de la Frontera, Antonio Nuñez Montoya, known as "Chocolate", works in the *cante jondo* ("deep song") tradition of Spanish music. Accompanied by the guitarist José Luis Postigo, he turns his proud, gypsy voice to all the traditional flamenco styles—*soléa, siguiriya, malagueña, taranto, fandango,* and *sevillana.* Rich and poetic, his lyrics, which are often autobiographical in content, take off on fantastic and surreal trajectories, shifting abruptly, in the manner of some Cuban songs, from reflections on human misery to evocations of fruit or descriptions of the women he has loved. This is flamenco of the highest quality.

Brazil. *The Bororo World of Sound.*
Musics and Musicians of the World
CD Unesco D 8201
▶ The Unesco Musics and Musicians of the World series here presents recordings of the Bororo Indians of Brazil, a people much written about by structural anthropologists. Sporting magnificent feather head-dresses (as well as jeans and Bermuda shorts, to judge by the record cover), the Bororos still live close to nature in the Mato Grosso rainforest. Music-making is a collective, ritual activity for them. The harsh rhythms of their songs, which are often monochord, evoke those of North American Indians. This extremely interesting CD is a contribution to the urgent task of preserving the cultural heritage of a threatened people.

Canada. *Inuit Games and Songs.*
Musics and Musicians of the World
CD Unesco D 8032
▶ The Inuit (or Eskimos, a term now considered pejorative) are currently enjoying a political and cultural revival. This recording of their games and songs—some imitating animal noises—demonstrates the wide range of sounds they can produce. The vocal effects may be clipped or raucous, smooth or sometimes even childlike, while the rhythmic breathing recalls the trance sessions of Jamaican fundamentalist churches. The seeming monotony of the songs is disconcerting at first, for they have little variation of pitch, but one soon begins to detect the nuances. Their scansion and emphatic rhythms bring to mind other Amerindian musical traditions, illustrating the diversity and underlying unity of America's pre-Columbian peoples.

Musical Sources.
CD Unesco D 8100
▶ In its Traditional Musics of the World series Unesco has recently brought out an exciting new compilation of music from different countries, including a Japanese Buddhist ritual, Easter liturgies from Sicily and the Syrian Orthodox Church, Gurara melodies from the Algerian Sahara, and instrumental music from Hong Kong. This imaginative selection of little-known material, some of which was previously unavailable, gives an idea of the wealth of musical traditions around the world.

POPULAR MUSIC

Tito Rodriguez. *Hits.*
CD WS Latino 118
▶ Nicknamed the "Puerto-Rican Billy Eckstine", Rodriguez used to top the bill at New York's famous Palladium Ballroom. A star of Latin-American music in the 1950s and 1960s, he won a huge following with his voice and charisma. His biggest hits, including "Vuelva la paloma", "Cuando, cuando, cuando" and "Cara de payaso", were recorded around 1962. Accompanied by his own band, with its rich brass section, Rodriguez offers uptempo mambos, spicy guarachas and lyrical boleros that stand comparison with the best today's salsa outfits can offer. It is a real pleasure to have his best tracks available on compact disc.

Creole Orchestras (1930-40).
Quand Paris biguinait.
CD MM 30876
▶ Black music had its heyday in Paris in the pre-war years when Cuban, Caribbean and Afro-American revues were staged in nightspots such as the Moulin Rouge, the Bal Nègre, the Boeuf sur le Toit and the Ambassadeurs. The capital swayed to the rhythms of the rumba, the conga and the beguine, the latter made popular by the clarinettist Alexandre Stellio in 1929. This CD brings together the best Caribbean artists of the era: the Créol's Band, the Boule Blanche, Madame Maïotte Almaby and her Island Orchestra, Roger Fanfan and his Guadeloupean Orchestra. Clarinets feature prominently in both the beguine and the mazurka, whose polyphonic orchestration is sometimes reminiscent of New Orleans jazz. The piano parts are closer in spirit to nineteenth-century Romantic music, while the short lead-in to "Matado-la" echoes West African chants. Playful numbers with titles like "Boussu A ou la Danse de Bam Bam", "Doudou Moin dans Bras Moin" and "Dans Trou Crab'la" give off a fine scent of rum and vanilla.

Mahalia Jackson. *Gospels, Spirituals, & Hymns.*
2 CDs Columbia 468663
▶ This compilation of Mahalia Jackson's greatest hits includes her masterpiece, "In the Upper Room". It features spirituals, hymns brought over from Europe by the early Protestant settlers, and post-1940s urban gospel songs from Chicago and elsewhere, with more elaborate scores that reflect the influence of soul music and jazz. Sometimes Mahalia is backed by choirs, at others by organ, piano and rhythm section. In either case her rich vibrato sends shivers down the spine. Jackson is the supreme voice of Afro-American religious music, and this record represents the summit of her art.

JAZZ

Stan Getz/Kenny Barron. *People Time.*
2 CDs. Gitanes Jazz
Emarcy 510 134-2
▶ Recorded shortly before he died, these tracks evince the musical understanding between Stan Getz and his last pianist, Kenny Barron. Many standards are included, among them "Night and Day", "East of the Sun" and "I Remember Clifford", all of which Getz plays with his customary smoothness. Many contemporary pianists, used to having the bass back up with the basic notes, find it extremely hard to improvise without this backing. Barron's tuneful solos are as fresh as ever, revealing him once more to be one of the most alert and discreet musicians on the jazz scene today.

Gilbert Sigrist *Trio. Number I. Gilbert Sigrist (piano), Laurent Sigrist (bass guitar), Francis Winninger/André Ceccarelli (drums).*
CD Columbia 468228 2
▶ The pianist Gilbert Sigrist, a pupil of Nikita Magaloff at the Geneva Conservatoire, took a risk in deciding to devote a record to jazz interpretations of French children's songs such as "Le petit navire", "A la claire fontaine" and "La mère Michel", but the results on this CD prove that the gamble has paid off. Sigrist's piano styling is sensitive and original, its subtle harmonies sometimes suggesting impressionist influences. Particularly successful is the enchanting "Petite rêverie", his own composition. Sigrist brings a breath of fresh air to jazz at a time when it is increasingly in thrall to technology.

Isabelle Leymarie

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Sport

Also featuring an interview with the Argentine singer

SUSANA RINALDI

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